

PART 3

**STRENGTHENING  
LEGISLATURES  
THROUGH  
INTERNATIONAL  
COOPERATION**



## Chapter 9

# Cooperation and Collaboration

Since the release of the first World e-Parliament Report in 2008, the theme of information and communication technologies in parliament has received growing international attention, both at the global and regional levels. It has attracted the interest of Speakers and Presiding Officers, members, parliamentary staff and experts in legislatures around the world.

At the highest political level, for example, three important gatherings of Speakers and Presidents of legislative bodies dealt with e-parliament related issues in the second half of 2009 and first quarter of 2010. The VIII meeting of the Speakers of Parliaments of G8 countries<sup>1</sup> (Rome, September 2009) addressed the topic of “the use of new communication technologies in the relationship between parliaments and civil society”, the V Ibero-American Parliamentary Forum<sup>2</sup> (Lisbon, November 2009) discussed “information and communication technologies at the service of modern parliaments”, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth<sup>3</sup> (Delhi, January 2010) reflected on “the use of technology in the parliamentary context”. Also, at the 55th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (Arusha, October 2009) legislators addressed “the role of parliament in shaping the Information Society” from the perspective of e-parliament.

Over the last three years the annual World e-Parliament Conference<sup>4</sup> has emerged as the most recognized and respected forum of the community of parliaments for addressing both the policy and technical issues involving the use of information and communication technology in the legislative setting. These meetings have created the opportunity for an increasingly sophisticated and extensive parliamentary dialogue on e-parliament. The growing participation of parliamentary delegations to this annual meeting testifies to the desire of legislatures to more effectively harness ICT for strengthening their institutional responsibilities and their interest in sharing good practices, experiences, and concerns among peers. In 2007 the first conference attracted to Geneva about 250 participants from 70 delegations; in 2008 the second conference brought together more than 300 participants from 80 delegations to the European Parliament in Brussels; and the third meeting in 2009 saw more than 400 participants from over 90 parliamentary delegations convening at the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington D.C. The expansion of policy and technical subjects dealt with by this conference, the attendance of parliamentary leaders and experts, the quality of the debates, and the perception of the meeting as a true platform for ongoing dialogue were at the centre of the increased involvement of legislatures from around the world.

In all of these global meetings, participants highlighted the value of inter-parliamentary cooperation as one of the least expensive and potentially most effective ways for parliaments to develop e-parliament policies and enhance their use of technology. Emphasis was also placed on coopera-

1 <http://g8presidenti.camera.it/inglese/303/schedabase.asp>

2 <http://www.forumlisboa2009.parlamento.pt/>

3 <http://www.cspoc.org/>

4 <http://www.ictparliament.org/index.php/world-e-parliament-conferences>

tion at the regional level, which, despite language and communication barriers, offers unique opportunities to share resources, overcome lack of know-how and establish common approaches.

Furthermore, these meetings made evident how the current context of Information Society developments holds great promise for the strengthening of parliaments through ICT: the technology is available, the knowledge of how to use it is increasing steadily, and there is a growing possibility to overcome geographical barriers and to learn from each other.

At this pivotal time, consensus has emerged on the need for the international community - including the community of technologically advanced legislatures - to strongly support parliaments in developing nations through capacity development and to help them make concrete progress in e-parliament. While acknowledging the obstacles posed by the digital divide, it has also become evident that parliaments in emerging democracies and developing nations should accept the responsibility of making fundamental and sustained ICT investments even if they appear expensive. Appropriate and cost effective communication technologies, based on the latest developments, can be leveraged to support a more informed, competent, transparent, and accountable legislature. There is a need for these legislatures to commit their own human and financial resources to ICT improvements, in addition to those of supporting organizations, as an important means to enhance their law-making, oversight, and representative responsibilities.

## RECENT PROGRESS IN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

The 2008 Report described several existing mechanisms for fostering global and regional cooperation<sup>5</sup>, such as the ASGP, ECPRD, NCSL, APKN, Red FTiP, and IFLA.<sup>6</sup> This Report focuses its attention on the progress made in the last two years by some of these networks and by newly established efforts to enhance technologies in the parliamentary environment.

### IFLA Section on Parliamentary Library and Research Services

The Section on Parliamentary Library and Research Services of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is a worldwide network of 111 members from 50 countries that facilitates the exchange of knowledge and expertise among parliamentary libraries through annual conferences and workshops. The Section, which is the largest professional network dealing with library and information services in the parliamentary environment, has no permanent secretariat, is entirely managed through the voluntary work of the membership and holds its annual conference in conjunction with the IFLA annual meeting.

Legislators rely on a great amount of information as they prepare and vote on legislation, monitor issues, develop policy solutions, influence government decision-making and assess the success of government programmes. Parliamentary libraries contribute to the effectiveness of parliaments by providing members with authoritative, independent, non-partisan and relevant information, particularly in developing countries where often governments remain the main keepers of information. As libraries and research services have evolved greatly in the last decades due to the emergence of new technologies, the most recent meetings of the Section have increasingly turned their focus to the role that ICT can play in strengthening parliamentary information

5 United Nations, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, *World e-Parliament Report 2008*, [New York]: United Nations, 2008, pp.141-150 [<http://www.ictparliament.org>].

6 Association of Secretaries General of Parliament (ASGP), European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network (APKN), Red de los Funcionarios Tecnólogos en los Parlamentos (Red FTiP), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

services (Cape Town, 2007<sup>7</sup>; Ottawa, 2008<sup>8</sup>; Rome, 2009<sup>9</sup>). It is also notable that in 2008 the Section organized a joint meeting with the IPU and the ASGP on “Informing Democracy: Building Capacity to Meet Parliamentarians’ Information and Knowledge Needs”<sup>10</sup>, which also partially addressed innovation aspects of servicing members of parliaments.

In particular, the last meeting of the Section held in Rome in August 2009 on “Digital Information for Democracy: Management, Access and Preservation” explored key cross-cutting topics falling in between the traditional library challenges and the IT environments, such as websites (Internet and intranet) and digital reference/information services; digitization processes and preservation; social networking tools and collaborative work; improved efficiency of library services through ICT; and, deployment of open source software. The meeting attracted more than 200 librarians, researchers and IT managers representing 64 countries and 86 legislative assemblies. In its three days of intensive discussions, the meeting emphasized the need to support the role of librarians in exploring innovation by building cooperative relations with parliamentary ICT experts, the necessity of using standards across libraries, and of cooperating and networking at different levels with parliamentary and non-parliamentary libraries.

In conjunction with this meeting, the IFLA Section, the Italian Joint Parliamentary Library and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament organized the workshop “Leveraging Technology for Parliamentary Library and Research Services” as a training module that targeted 45 librarians and ICT experts from more than 20 developing countries. The training represented a successful example of a collaborative effort among the partners.

The Section recently published a revised edition of the *Guidelines for Legislative Libraries*<sup>11</sup>, which take into account the changes in the provision of information services due to the development of the Internet and ICT management tools. It is also preparing the next annual meeting to be held in Sweden in 2010 on the theme “Open Access to Parliamentary Information”.

These are all promising signs for the adoption of technology by parliamentary libraries, particularly in view of the findings outlined in Chapter 6. The work undertaken by the Section has made its members increasingly aware of the challenges and opportunities of innovation and of how to professionally apply technology tools, including new media, in the library context. However, more needs to be done through external funding to mobilize the expertise of the Section membership to support parliamentary libraries in developing nations that need assistance and skills development.

### The Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network

The institution of the Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network (APKN) was discussed for the first time at a meeting hosted by the National Assembly of Nigeria in Abuja in November 2007. In June 2008, the APKN was formally established as a result of the conference hosted by the People’s Assembly of Egypt in Cairo, where representatives of 36 parliamentary assemblies from across Africa finalized its Charter. As of 2009, the Charter had been officially endorsed by 14 parliamentary assemblies.<sup>12</sup>

7 <http://ifla.parliament.gov.za/Intro.aspx>

8 <http://www.preifla2008.ca/>

9 <http://www.preifla2009.parlamento.it/>

10 <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/asgp08.htm>

11 Cuninghame, Keith, *Guidelines for Legislative Libraries* [2<sup>nd</sup> completely updated and enl. edition], Berlin: De Gruyter Saur, 2009.

12 National Assembly of Cameroon, National Assembly of Congo, People’s Assembly of Egypt, Parliament of Ghana, National Assembly of Kenya, National Assembly of Nigeria, National Assembly of the Seychelles, National Assembly of South Africa, House of Assembly of Swaziland, National Assembly of Togo, Parliament of Uganda, National Assembly of Zambia, East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADCPF).

The APKN mission is to support the work of African assemblies by establishing mechanisms and procedures for exchanging information and experience in areas of common interest. It also intends to strengthen cooperation for institutional development, capacity building and staff training, and collaborate on technology development to serve parliamentary functions. The major areas of cooperation include legislative processes, information and research services, information and communication technologies, and public information and media relations.

The APKN, whose interim secretariat is hosted by the People's Assembly of Egypt, is in the process of establishing its Executive Committee, which is tasked with the formulation of policies, and the Council of Coordinators, which is responsible for initiating, organizing, and supporting knowledge-related activities.

Although the setting up of these governance mechanisms is still in process, a number of important activities have already been realized. Under the APKN framework, a set of Legislative Drafting Guidelines<sup>13</sup> were elaborated in five languages (Arabic, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish) and the Africa News Monitor<sup>14</sup> system was deployed to facilitate the retrieval of useful on-line news from around the world.

In March 2009, African legislators met in Kigali at the conference "Development of an equitable Information Society in Africa: The role of Parliaments" hosted by the Parliament of Rwanda and organized in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) under the aegis of the Pan African Parliament. Subsequently, the ICT Thematic Group of the APKN met in Cape Town to discuss Internet Governance issues in Africa and what role parliaments can play in ensuring the development of an equitable Information Society. Participants agreed on an action plan<sup>15</sup> to be implemented before the next APKN Conference scheduled for October 2010. It must be noted that in October 2009, the APKN's mandate received strong support from the Pan African Parliament Speakers' Conference in Johannesburg, raising expectations for the realization of a wider membership during 2010.

In December 2009, the three-day workshop "Strengthening the Cooperation among Parliamentary Libraries in the Framework of the Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network (APKN)" was hosted by the Italian Joint Parliamentary Library in Rome and supported by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament and the Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan, with the cooperation of the IFLA Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments. This meeting led to the establishment of the Working Group on Information and Research within the APKN. The Working Group will enable parliamentary libraries of African assemblies to join efforts and resources using ICT tools in order to enhance the quality of their services. Heads of parliamentary libraries and senior library staff of 23 parliamentary assemblies committed to undertake the following main activities in 2010: a) building a directory of parliamentary libraries in Africa; b) preparing four common dossiers on topics of continental relevance; c) creating a multilingual subject index for documents retrieval across languages; and d) building an African repository of laws on Information Society-related issues.

Despite the many challenges ahead, the progress made by the APKN is evident and commendable. The network represents an enormous opportunity for African assemblies to make advancements in various areas of parliamentary work through the sharing of available resources and

13 <http://drafting.apkn.org>

14 <http://anm.apkn.org>

15 <http://www.parliaments.info/documents/apkn-action-plan-ict>

knowledge, by strengthening regional inter-parliamentary cooperation at many levels, and by finding common ground for institutional developments.

### Secretaries General Forum of Asia-Pacific Parliaments

In July 2009, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea organized and hosted the first Secretaries General Forum of Asia-Pacific Parliaments (SGFAPP). The Forum was held in response to the need for more systematic and consistent exchange of information among parliaments in the region. The five-day event focusing on e-parliament brought together 83 delegates from 42 parliaments of 32 countries. Participants confirmed the need to establish a strong regional inter-parliamentary network based on e-parliament and adopted the Seoul Communiqué. They committed to sharing e-parliament experiences and expanding technical and people-to-people exchanges among parliamentary administrations. They also agreed that the Forum shall be held on a regular basis. The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea committed providing support to the Forum in the future, including by building a dedicated website.

### Inter-parliamentary network in Latin America and the Caribbean

During a workshop held in November 2009 representatives of parliaments from Latin America and the Caribbean agreed to put in motion a process of regional dialogue designed to establish a formal mechanism of inter-parliamentary cooperation in the region. The meeting, titled “The Impact of New Technologies in Parliament’s Transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean”, was organized by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), in collaboration with the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. The event was attended by more than 75 participants, including members of parliament, Secretaries General, and ICT Directors, representing 21 countries of the region. The workshop built on the results of a meeting held in 2007 that brought together ICT staff of Latin American legislatures to discuss possible models of cooperation designed to support ICT in parliaments.

Participants adopted a final communiqué that stressed the importance of ICT to strengthen parliaments’ legislative, representational and oversight functions, and called on the IDB to facilitate the creation of an inter-parliamentary network on the use of ICT in parliaments.

The next steps towards the creation of the network will be supported by the IDB through its project “Connected Parliaments: Impact of New Technologies in the Transformation of the Legislative Branch”.

## EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENTARY NETWORKS

The progress made by the newly established regional networks, coupled with the activities of those already in existence at the global, regional and sub-regional levels, is reflected in the 2009 survey findings. Figure 9.1 shows the level of participation of parliaments in formal mechanisms of cooperation dealing with ICT issues. 59% of parliaments reported that they were members of at least one parliamentary network, while 19% are considering joining one. However, 22% stated that they are not considering becoming a member of formal mechanisms of cooperation on ICT issues. This may be due to their lack of opportunity to do so, either because some networks are not yet fully established or because there are no plans to establish one in their particular region.

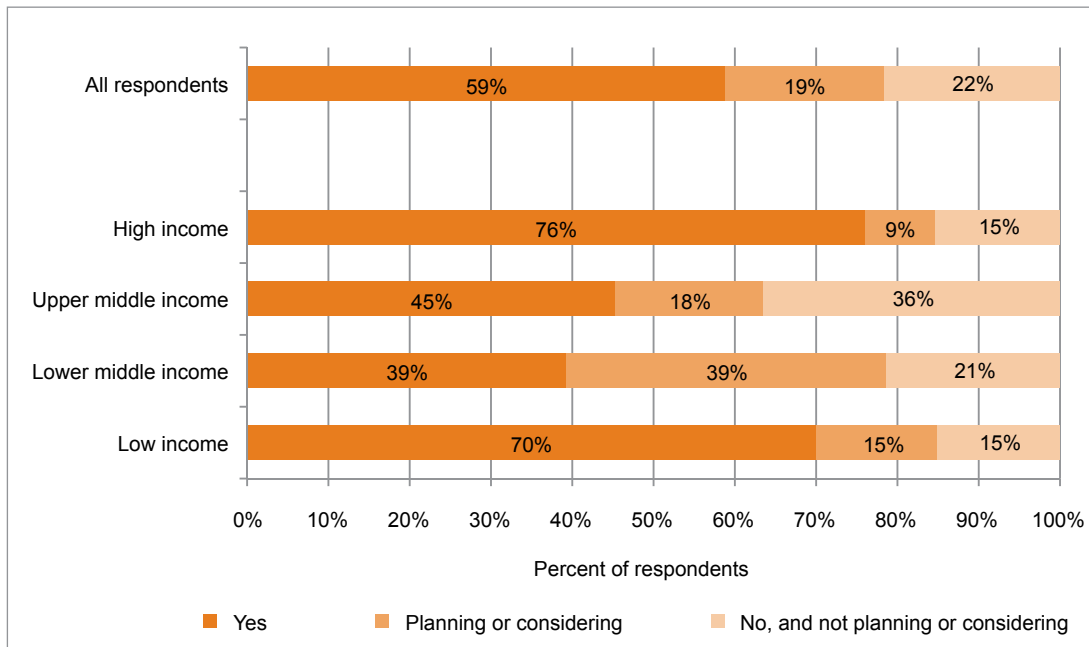


As previously noted, parliament-to-parliament exchanges can be a cost effective means of addressing common challenges. Therefore, it is a concern that at this time, when sharing the benefits of ICT can be especially helpful, at least 40% of parliaments do not have current exchanges with peers.

The analysis of participation by income level shows an interesting pattern. Legislatures in the high and low income groups have the largest percentage of participation (76% and 70% respectively), while the participation of those in the upper and lower middle income groups is at about 40%. However, chambers in the lower middle income group show stronger intentions than those in the upper middle income group to join a formal network in the near future. These results may reflect the efforts that are being made in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean to consolidate new instruments of inter-parliamentary cooperation. When asked to identify the networks in which they participated, parliaments mentioned the European Centre for Parliamentary Documentation and Research (ECPRD) and the Africa Parliament Knowledge Network (APKN) most frequently. Although not formally a network, the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament received the third highest number of listings.

Other networks less frequently mentioned by legislatures include IPEX (Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange), GLIN (Global Legislative Information Network), the SADC Parliamentary Forum’s IT experts forum, the Parliamentary Association of Secretaries General of the Portuguese Speaking Parliaments, and the Nordic Countries Parliaments ICT Conference.

Figure 9.1: Participation in formal networks concerning ICT, by income groups



(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 18: 134 respondents)



## THE NATURE OF INTER-PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

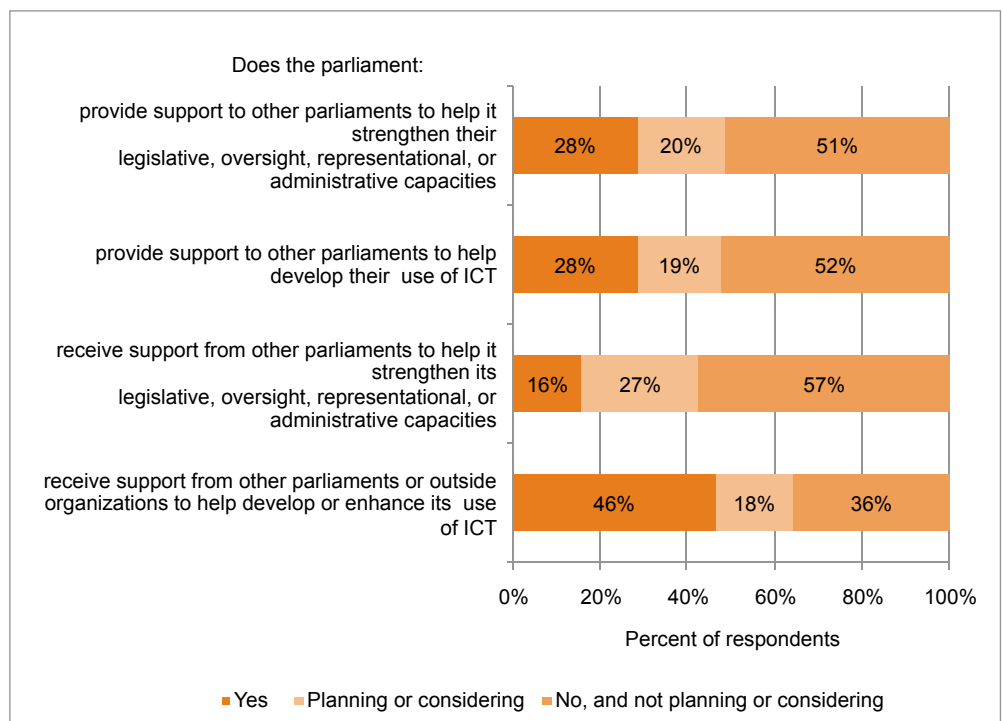
To understand the current nature of inter-parliamentary cooperation and institutional development in the ICT domain, the 2009 survey asked all parliaments whether they were providing support to other legislatures to help them strengthen their legislative, oversight, representational or administrative capacities. It also posed a more precise question concerning e-parliament by requesting legislatures to indicate if they were *providing* support, or would be *willing to provide* support, to other chambers in the ICT area. Two similar questions inquired whether parliaments were *receiving* support to strengthen their legislative, oversight, representative or administrative capacities and to enhance the use of ICT. It must be noted that in the latter instance the survey asked if the support was received not only from other parliaments but also from outside organizations.

As Figure 9.2 shows, just over one fourth (28%) of parliaments provide support to other legislatures in the broader areas of parliamentary development and for developing their use of ICT. Only 16% of legislatures, however, receive support in legislative, oversight, representational or administrative capacities, suggesting a concentration of inter-parliamentary cooperation towards a fewer number of parliamentary bodies. On the other hand, 46% reported that they were receiving assistance (or would like to receive support) in the area of ICT from other parliaments and outside organizations. This finding underlines the significant role that other actors may play, in addition to parliaments, in helping legislatures to strengthen their capacities in ICT and subsequently the importance of coordinating actions between these actors and the contributing parliaments.

A positive finding seen in Figure 9.2 is that the percentages of parliaments that are planning or considering receiving assistance to improve their legislative, oversight, representational or administrative capacities (27%) or in ICT (18%) is matched by the percentages of parliaments planning or considering providing this support (20% and 19% respectively). Over half

of parliaments do not provide, or plan to provide support in either areas (51% and 52%). But while 57% do not currently receive, and do not intend to receive assistance from other parliaments on general parliamentary development, the number of legislatures decreases to 36% with

Figure 9.2: Areas of inter-parliamentary cooperation



(Source: 2009 survey, Section 1, Questions 20, 26, 23, 28; 134 respondents)

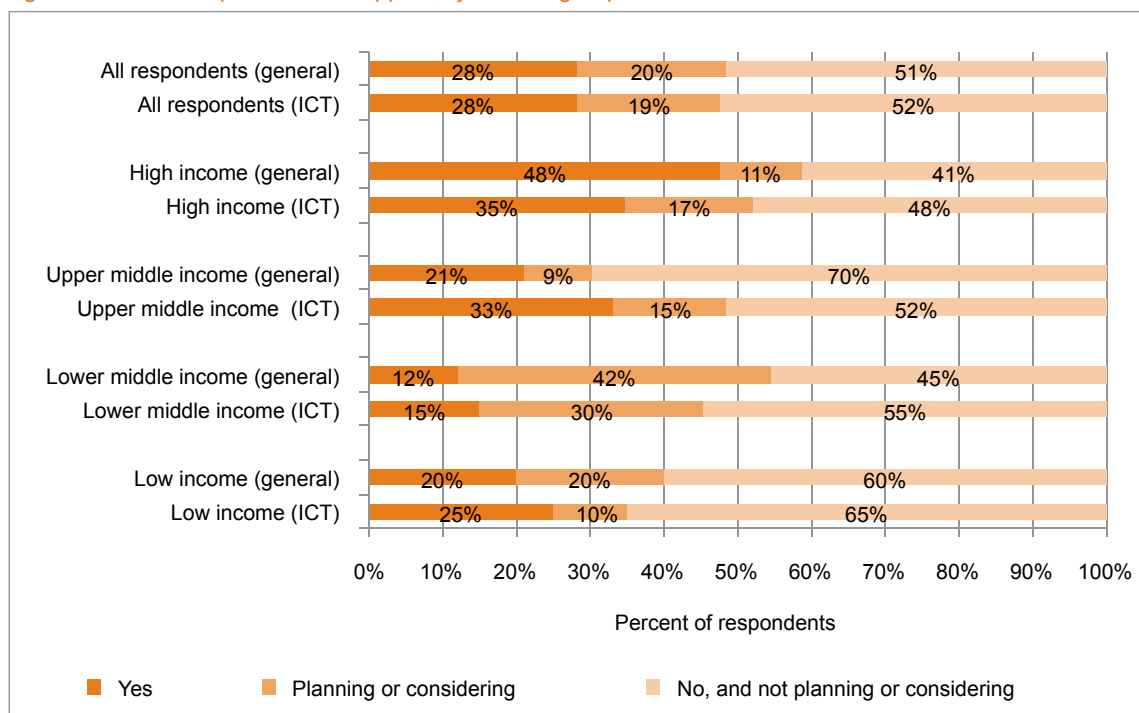
regard to ICT, suggesting that more parliaments want support to improve the state of their technology.

As expected, the largest percentage of parliaments contributing to capacity development comes from the high and upper middle income groups. Unexpectedly, though, there are also significant percentages of parliaments in the low and lower middle income groups providing or considering providing assistance (see Figure 9.3). This is an interesting result as it suggests ongoing and possibly increasing south-south inter-parliamentary cooperation or even south-north exchanges, a finding that is worth exploring in future analyses.

With regard to ICT, parliaments in the upper and lower middle income groups show a somewhat similar pattern when combining those that provide assistance with those planning or considering (48% and 45% respectively). However, in the upper middle income group the legislatures that currently provide support are twice the percentage of those in the lower middle income group.

Overall, the results shown in Figure 9.3 indicate a willingness to provide ICT support across income groups, particularly from countries with lower income levels. Results also underscore the fact that only 35% of parliaments from the high income group currently provide support to other parliaments, and 17% are considering following their example. Regrettably, this means that the ICT expertise of 48% of legislatures from the high income group is not yet being made available to other parliaments.

Figure 9.3: Areas of provision of support, by income groups

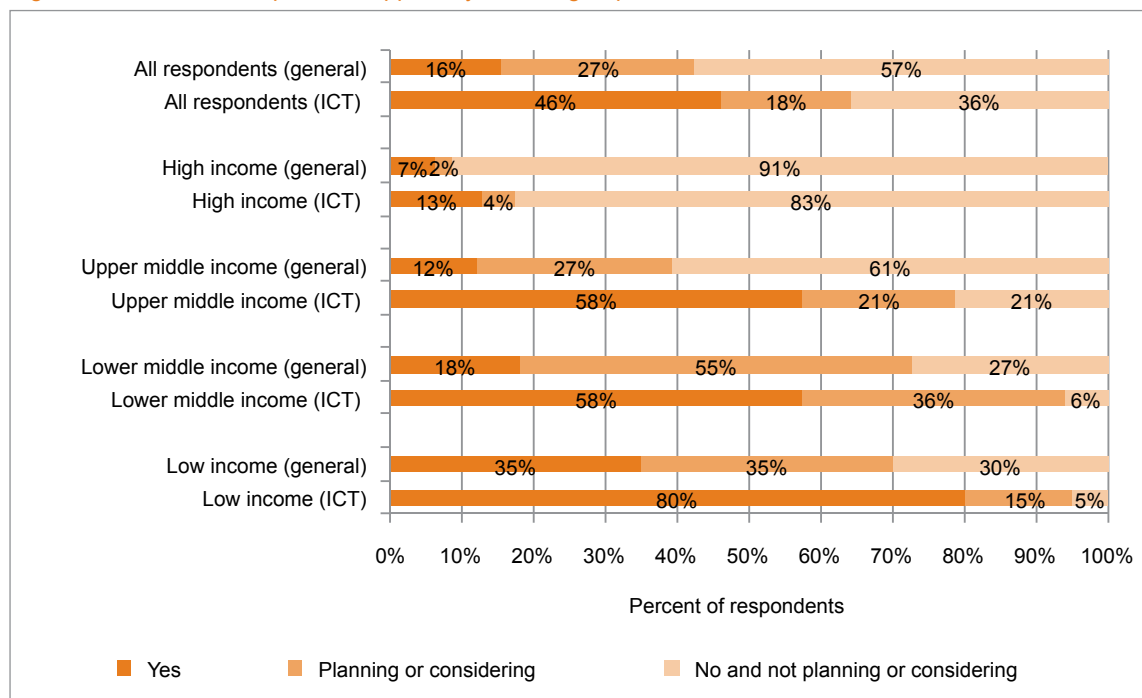


(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Questions 20 and 23)

Parliaments in the high income group are understandably the least interested in receiving support in both areas, although 17% are either receiving or planning to receive assistance in ICT (see Figure 9.4). Surprisingly, the percentage of those in the upper and lower middle income groups currently receiving support in ICT either from other parliaments or outside organizations is similar (58%), and relatively large percentages of legislatures in both income groups would like to receive ICT support (21% and 36% respectively). The number of legislatures receiving support is the largest in the low income group (80%), providing a clear indication that the combined efforts of the donor and parliament community are directed to those most in need.

Many parliaments from the upper middle, lower middle and low income groups (27%, 55% and 35% respectively) are also looking for support from other parliamentary assemblies to strengthen their legislative, oversight, representational or administrative capacities.

Figure 9.4: Areas of reception of support, by income groups



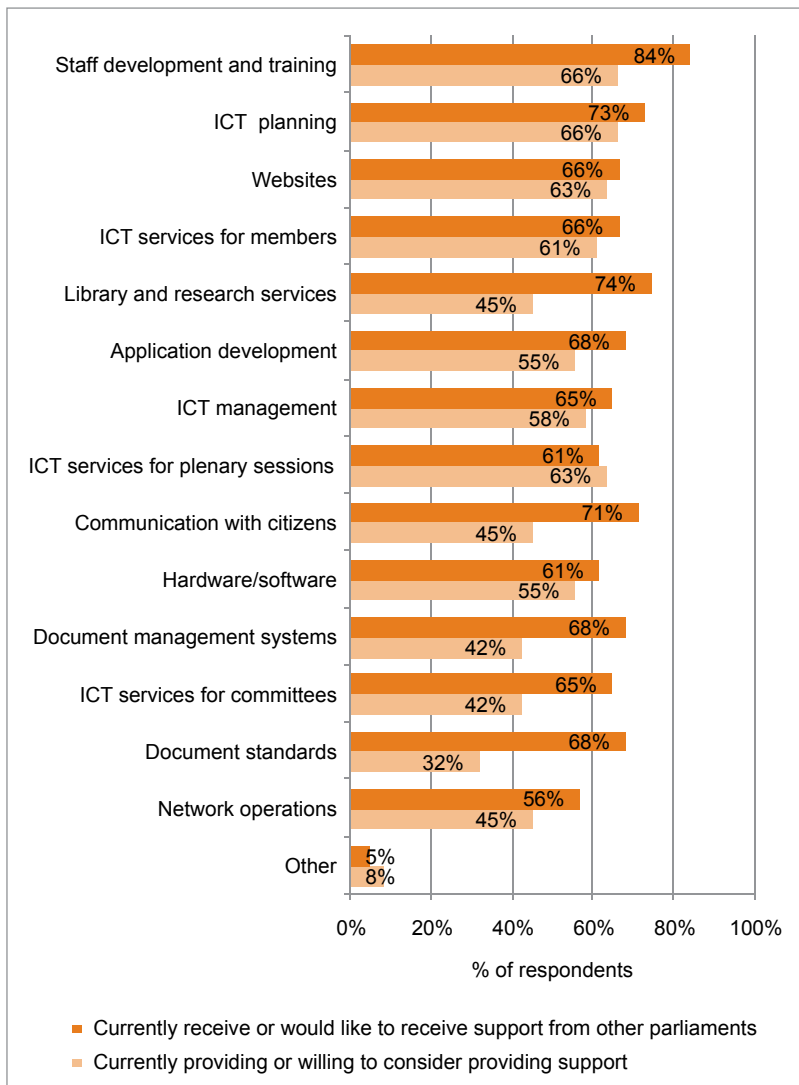
(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Questions 26 and 28)

## SPECIFIC AREAS OF ICT SUPPORT

While it was not possible through the survey to obtain results concerning the incidence or degree of the assistance provided, two questions were posed to those that either currently provide or currently receive support for ICT regarding the specific areas in which assistance was offered and needed. Despite the limited number of respondents (28% and 46% respectively), these questions provide useful guidance, especially with regard to the ICT areas in which parliaments would like to receive assistance.

Figure 9.5 shows a combined view of the areas in which support is provided or received. The five areas in which the most parliaments are providing or are willing to provide support are: Staff development and training (66%), ICT planning (66%), Websites (63%), ICT services for plenary sessions (63%) and ICT services for members (61%). These are all specific areas addressed in previous chapters of this Report and considered essential to make improvements in e-parliament.

Figure 9.5: Specific areas of support in ICT among parliaments



(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Questions 24 and 29)

what parliaments provide or are willing to provide and what parliaments receive or would like to receive. The greatest challenges in terms of ICT assistance, reflecting a gap bigger than 25%, are in Document standards (34%), Library and research services (29%), Document management systems (26%) and Communication with citizens (26%).

Conversely, the areas currently presenting the best opportunities for ICT cooperation are those where the gap between the offer and demand of support is less than 10%: ICT services for

Understandably, the two areas where the fewest parliaments are providing or are willing to provide assistance are “document management systems” and “document standards”, which were already highlighted in previous chapters as weaker areas in many legislatures.

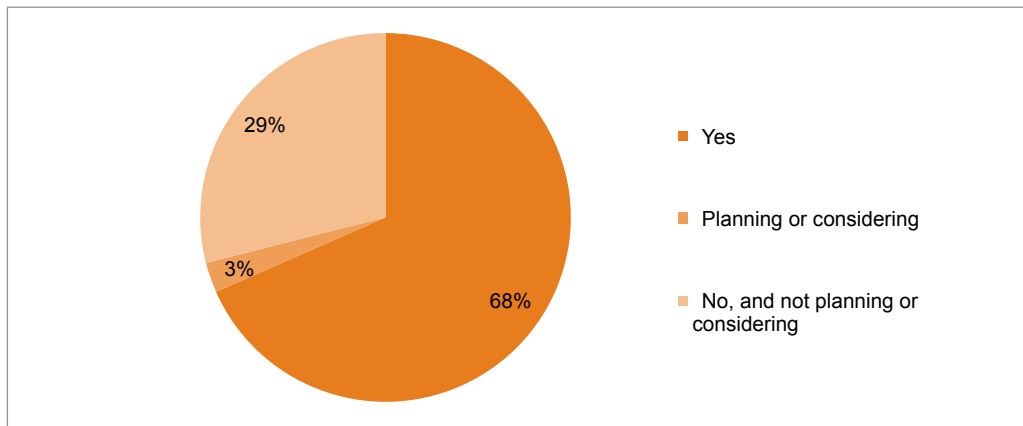
The top four areas – all of them over 70% - showing the largest percentages of parliaments that are receiving and would like to receive support are: Staff development and training (84%), Library and research services (73%), ICT planning (73%), and Communication with citizens (71%). While two of these match with what the most legislatures provide and are willing to (Staff development and training and ICT planning), the other two show a large gap between what is wanted and what is provided (Libraries and research services and Communication with citizens). It is interesting to note that assistance in all ICT areas listed in Figure 9.5 is needed by more than 50% of requesting parliaments.

Figure 9.5 also identifies the gaps in the specific ICT areas between

plenary, Websites, ICT services for members, Hardware and software, ICT planning, and ICT management.

Finally, it is interesting to note that of the 38% of parliaments currently providing assistance to other parliaments, 68% have a committee or an office responsible for it (see Figure 9.6).

Figure 9.6: Parliaments that have a committee or office responsible for assistance



(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 22)

## THE CHALLENGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Parliaments are continuing to seek more effective mechanisms of cooperation and collaboration to reinforce their capacity to use information and communication technologies in legislative settings. Inter-parliamentary sharing of practices and experiences at many levels are increasingly contributing to building knowledge, sharing solutions, improving human resources skills, and setting benchmarks and standards. However, the rich expertise embodied within inter-parliamentary networks is not always made available outside the domain of the network, nor translated into concrete collaboration and assistance programmes between individual parliaments.

This type of support is more often carried out through parliament-to-parliament relations, or through triangular modalities, frequently in the context of agreements and partnerships that exist among chambers and parliaments on an array of topics. Parliamentary assistance is delivered in the form of advisory services, seminars and workshops, study tours, and training, and less frequently by the provision of infrastructure, applications, and systems, as in the case of the e-PAI initiative described in Box 9.1. These items are generally obtained through a parliament's own allocations or from outside organizations and donors. And as survey findings suggest, there is significant support provided by these actors to strengthen ICT use in parliaments.

Today, leveraging the forces of all players in an effective and coordinated aid effort is the main challenge for the international community. Long-term and sustainable achievements can only be reached by mapping and sharing information and by jointly exploiting the knowledge of parliamentary associations and networks, the expertise residing in parliaments willing to provide support and in those not yet engaged, the engagement of the leaderships and administrations in recipient legislatures, and the funding and technical capacity of multilateral and bilateral development agencies.

Box 9.1

**e-Parliament Assistance Initiative (e-PAI)**

*The e-PAI Project was launched last November to assist countries in need of IT infrastructure in laying the groundwork for e-Parliament. Korea's flagship electronics companies such as Samsung and LG provide technical assistance for the Project.*

*Starting from Cambodia, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea has donated a total of 400 computers to Nepal and Lao in Asia, Rwanda, Tanzania and Ethiopia in Africa and Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Central Asia.*

*Marking the 1-year anniversary of this project next month, the Korean National Assembly plans to upgrade e-PAI both in quality and quantity.*

*A survey revealed that 25 countries have expressed interest in the e-PAI Project with the number of computers in demand reaching 1,200. We plan to hand over 150 PCs to Mongolia, the Philippines and Cambodia by the end of this month and additional 150 PCs to Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi by the end of this year.*

*By the year 2010, a total of 550 PCs will be secured to meet the needs.*

*The expansion of technology cooperation is also under review to donate software packages enabling the e-Bills System and the Parliamentary Information System and to facilitate knowledge-sharing in overall parliamentary administration.*

*The e-Bills System helps to track all bills in the legislative process from introduction to committee deliberation to house floor consideration. The Parliamentary Information System provides all legislative information relating to bills under deliberation and laws enacted or amended.*

*Had it not been for generous assistance from countries around the world, Korea's economy and democracy would not be where it stands now. To pay back what we owed, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea wishes to find what it can do to make a contribution to advancing global e-democracy. I hope the seeds we plant with PCs will bloom into flowers of global e-democracy.*

Park Kye-Dong, Secretary General of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.  
Communication to the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament (ASGP), October 2009, Geneva

## SUMMARY

The theme of information and communication technologies in parliament has received growing international attention, including among Speakers and Presiding Officers, legislators, parliamentary staff and experts. Over the last three years the annual World e-Parliament Conference<sup>16</sup> has emerged as the most recognized and respected forum of the community of parliaments for addressing both the policy and technical issues involving the use of ICT in the legislative setting. At these gatherings, delegations repeatedly highlighted the value of inter-parliamentary cooperation and collaboration through networks and associations as one of the least expensive and potentially most effective ways for parliaments to develop e-parliament policies and enhance their use of technology.

In the past two years, the progress made by parliamentary networks such as the IFLA Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments, the Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network (APKN) and the Secretaries General Forum of Asia-Pacific Parliaments (SGFAPP), as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean, has been notable and commendable.

However, the level of participation of parliaments in formal mechanisms of cooperation dealing with ICT issues is not fully satisfactory. While almost 60% of parliaments reported that they are members of at least one parliamentary network, 22% stated that they are not considering such participation. Interestingly, legislatures in the high and low income groups have the largest percentages of participation (76% and 70% respectively), while the participation of those in the upper and lower middle income groups is at about 40%. Given the demonstrated value of cooperation, more needs to be done to encourage active involvement by parliaments from all income groups.

At the international level, consensus emerged on the need for the international community - including the community of technologically advanced legislatures - to strongly support parliaments in developing nations at this pivotal time through collaboration on capacity development and to help them make concrete progress in e-parliament. The 2009 survey asked a series of questions that provide indications about the primary areas and the level of collaboration. Just over one fourth (28%) of parliaments provide support to other legislatures for developing their use of ICT. On the other hand, 46% of parliaments reported that they were receiving, or would like to receive assistance in the area of ICT from other parliaments and outside organizations. This finding underlines the significant role that other development actors play, in addition to parliaments, in helping legislatures to strengthen their capacities in ICT.

Survey results also suggest ongoing and possibly increasing south-south inter-parliamentary cooperation or even south-north exchanges, a finding that is worth exploring in future analyses. Another interesting finding is the indication of a great willingness to provide ICT support across income groups, particularly from countries with lower income levels. Results also underscore that only 35% of the potential support from legislatures from high income countries has been mobilized so far. Regrettably, the ICT expertise of 48% of legislatures from the high income group is not yet being made available to other parliaments. The number of legislatures receiving support is the largest in the low income group (80%), providing a clear indication that the combined efforts of the donor and parliament community are directed to those most in need.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ictparliament.org/index.php/world-e-parliament-conferences>



A deeper analysis of data shows that assistance in all ICT specific areas listed in the survey is needed by more than 50% of requesting parliaments. The gaps in specific ICT areas between what the most parliaments provide and are willing to provide and what the most parliaments receive and would like to receive reveal that the greatest challenges are in the areas of Document standards (34%), Library and research services (29%), Document management systems (26%) and Communication with citizens (26%). The ICT areas currently presenting the easiest opportunities for concrete collaboration among parliaments are those where the gap between the offer and demand of assistance is smallest: ICT services for plenary, Websites, ICT services for members, Hardware and software, ICT planning, and ICT management.

Against these findings, parliaments are continuing to seek more effective mechanisms of cooperation and collaboration to respond to the needs and concerns of legislatures around the world. However, it is only by leveraging the forces of all the actors concerned – such as parliamentary associations and networks, legislatures and donors - that long-term and sustainable achievements will be reached.