

Partnering to promote child rights and gender equality in political agendas

Partnerships between parliamentarians and advocates for women and children are also helping to focus greater attention on gender equality and protection against harm, exploitation, abuse and violence. One such partnership is the collaboration between Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UNICEF, which dates back over a decade and a half beginning with IPU's support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. More recently, IPU jointly organized with UNICEF the Parliamentary Forum on Children during the UN Special Session on Children in May 2002. Since then, a strong partnership has developed between the two organizations, especially in the area of child protection and the promotion of gender equality. Some of the key joint actions have included:

- **Child protection handbook for parliamentarians:** *Child Protection: A Handbook for Parliamentarians*, launched in 2004, covers a wide range of themes related to child protection, including trafficking of children, violence against children, female genital mutilation/cutting, the sexual exploitation of children,

children and war, and juvenile justice. The handbook serves as a catalyst for action, providing concrete examples of ways to build a protective environment for children and parliamentarians' responses to the challenges of child protection.

- **Child trafficking handbook:** This jointly produced handbook by IPU and UNICEF was launched in 2005 at the IPU Assembly. *Combating Child Trafficking* served as a tool for a regional parliamentary seminar, 'Developing a Protective Framework for Children: The role of parliaments', in February 2006. The seminar, held in Hanoi at the invitation of the Vietnamese National Assembly, included parliamentarians from 13 countries.

- **High-level panels on gender equality and child protection:** In recent years, the two organizations have held a series of panels at the annual IPU assemblies to focus attention on gender equality and child protection. The first panel, which addressed the issue of commercial sexual exploitation, took place at the 2004 IPU Assembly in Mexico. The following year, the panel

addressed the issue of violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict. In 2006, the panel – which also featured the collaboration of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) – examined the impact of HIV/AIDS on children.

- **Regional forums:** On the recommendation of the IPU Task Force of Parliamentarians against female genital mutilation, the African Parliamentary Union, UNICEF and IPU organized a regional conference in Dakar, in December 2005 on parliamentary action to put an end to FGM/C. The conference brought together members of Parliament from 21 countries. It aimed at strengthening their action by familiarizing them with the experience of TOSTAN – a non-governmental organization based in Senegal whose Community Empowerment Programme has been successful in discouraging the practice of FGM/C – and similar successful initiatives to combat protection abuses against children.

See References, page 88.