

International Consensus on Standards for Democratic Parliaments

Meeting of the Democracy and Peace Committee

COPA 10th General Assembly

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Marc Hanson

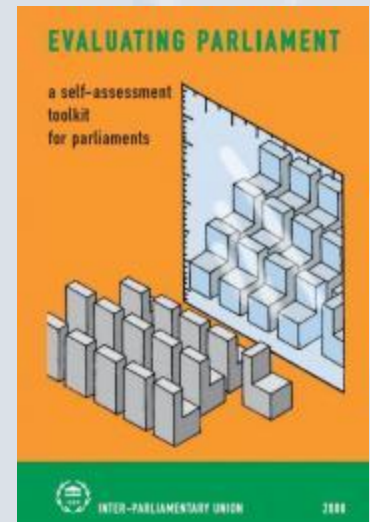
National Democratic Institute

Overview of Presentation

1. Overview of the standards process
2. The value of developing consensus/plural approaches
3. Areas of consensus among the major frameworks (CPA, APF, IPU, NDI)
4. Recommendations for continuing the standards process
5. Resources on standards

Overview of the Standards Process

- **2006: Codification of Standards Begins**
 - Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), and NDI hold workshops and develop foundational standards frameworks
- **2007-2010: Proliferation of Standards-Based Approach**
 - SADC Parliamentary Forum, *Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF), as well as the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) initiated projects on standards frameworks
 - Regionalization of standards within CPA
 - Development of assessment and self-assessment frameworks



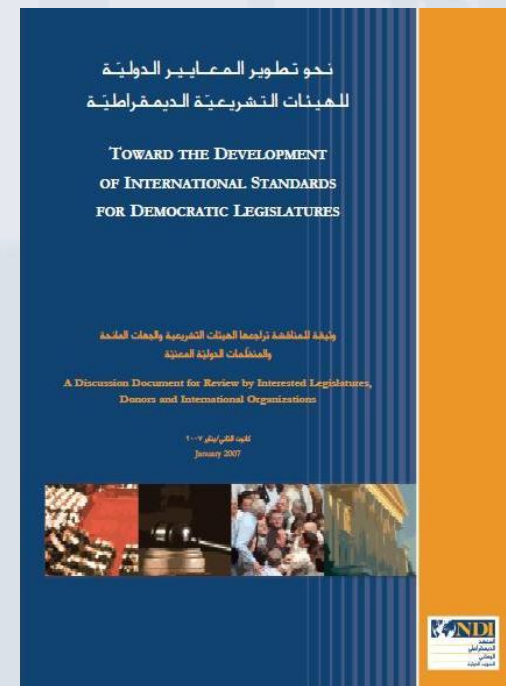
Overview of the Standards Process

- **2010: Discussion on Areas of International Consensus Begins**
 - Participants at standards conference in Paris adopt statement highlighting areas of international consensus within standards frameworks



Characteristics of the Standards Process

- **Collaborative:**
 - Frameworks developed through collaborative process and borrow language and criteria from one another
- **Parliament-Centered:**
 - Parliaments have been drivers of the process, a factor that has led to global support for the standards-based approach
- **Pluralistic:**
 - Development of a variety of frameworks has led to greater participation by parliaments worldwide.



The Value of Developing Common Frameworks

- **Common Frameworks:**
 - Provide a single set of principles that all parliaments can strive to achieve
 - Provide unique starting point for parliamentary strategic planning
 - Facilitate donor coordination on parliamentary development
 - Allow for creation of common assessment tool for effectiveness of parliamentary development and aid interventions

The Value of Building Plural Approaches

- **Plural Approaches:**

- Diverse frameworks with legitimacy are preferable to a common framework with less parliamentary support
- Multiple discussions are helpful in building awareness among MPs
- “Competitive” dynamics among actors are often healthy in driving change
- Multiple frameworks with strong commonality is helpful in reinforcing legitimacy with respect to the areas of overlap

Areas of International Consensus

- *As identified by participants at the International Conference on Benchmarking and Self-Assessment for Democratic Legislatures, hosted by WBI and UNDP, Paris, March 2010*
- **Core Values of Democratic Parliaments**

“A democratic parliament is one that is representative of the political will and social diversity of the population, and is effective in its legislative, oversight and representation functions, at the subnational, national and international levels.

Crucially, it is also transparent, accessible, and accountable to the citizens that it represents.”

Areas of International Consensus, cont.

- **Institutional Independence** - Examples include parliamentary immunity, budgetary autonomy, control over staff, recourse to own expertise, sufficient resources to perform constitutional functions, adequate physical infrastructure, control over own internal rules, and calling itself into extraordinary session.
- **Democratic Legitimacy and Representation** - Examples include democratic elections, lower house elected through universal suffrage, regular periodic elections, and no restrictions on candidacy by race and gender, language or religion.



Areas of International Consensus, cont.

- **Procedural Fairness** - Examples include written procedural rules, plenary sittings in public, order of precedence of motions and points of order, meaningful opportunity for debate, use of official languages, right of all members to express their views freely, and arrangements to ensure that opposition and minority parties can contribute effectively to the work of parliament.
- **Parliamentary Organization** - Examples include right of legislatures to form committees, presumption that legislation is referred to committees, election of committee chairs and leadership according to procedures, right to form parliamentary party groups, right to permanent, professional, nonpartisan staff, and protection of head of the nonpartisan service from undue political pressure.

Areas of International Consensus, cont.



- **Core Legislative and Oversight Functions** - Examples include the ability of lower house to initiate legislation, rights to propose amendments and to amend legislation, right to consult experts and staff on legislation, ability to hold public hearings or receive testimony from experts, the right to subpoena or obtain documents, and methods for protecting witnesses.

Areas of Less Consensus

- Characteristics Associated with the Type of Parliamentary System
- Political Finance
- Parliamentary Values and Ethical Issues
- Criteria around specific innovations or “Emerging” Practices
- Criteria that are Highly Dependent on Size of Jurisdictions or Availability of Resources

Resources on Standards: AGORA Portal for Parliamentary Development



- www.agora-parl.org
- Portal for parliamentary development by UNDP, WBI, NDI, International IDEA, European Commission
- Features resources, ask experts, project map, social networking feature
- For MPs, staffers, parliamentary development professionals, others.
- English & French (Russian, Arabic, Spanish coming soon)

AGORA's Parliamentary Standards Page:
<http://www.agora-parl.org/node/2705>