

Feedback on IFLA Conference in Sweden (6-15 August 2010)

I was nominated to participate in the 26th IFLA Pre-Conference of Library and Research Services for Parliaments and the "World Library and Information Congress: 76th IFLA General Conference and Assembly" held in Sweden from 6 to 15 August 2010. This year the theme of the IFLA General Conference was 'Open access to knowledge: promoting sustainable progress'. The IFLA Pre-Conference of Library and Research Services for Parliaments was held in Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) at Stockholm from 6 to 9 August 2010. The theme of the Pre-Conference was 'Open access to parliamentary knowledge: promoting sustainable progress'. This theme was kept keeping in view the broader theme of the General Conference. The following were the main subjects for different sessions of the Pre-Conference:

- (i) The Library and the Research service: open doors and close cooperation – how do we do it?;
- (ii) Easy-to-Read information from government to citizen: the need for easy-to-read information to enhance the democratic society;
- (iii) Increased openness, communication and quality for the Research Service, Library and Archives;
- (iv) Parliaments of the future and new challenges in parliaments;

- (v) Parliamentary libraries and research services of the future;
and
- (vi) Establishing a Parliamentary Budget Office.

On many aspects of these themes, there were PowerPoint presentations made by the colleagues from other Parliaments as also by the representatives of other important international organizations such as Hansard Society, London; International Parliamentary Union; and Global Centre for ICT in Parliaments. The presentations were followed by question answer sessions. There were close workshops on each aspect of the theme which provided vast opportunities for interactions and knowledge sharing. Animated discussions took place among the participants of the workshop sessions sharing best practices and common concerns.

There was an extremely important session on Parliaments of the Future and the New Challenges in Parliaments. The keynote address of the session was given by Mr. Andy Williamson of Hansard Society, London. He made a very informative and thought provoking presentation on the challenges facing the Parliaments world over with regard to how they connect with the people and the need for proactive measures by the Parliaments to remain in touch with the people to strengthen representative democratic institutions. This session was followed by a panel discussion in which special emphasis was made on the evolving Parliaments in the fledgling democracies. Keeping in view with the pace in which Parliaments are changing, a need was felt to have a discussion on Parliamentary Library and Research Services

of the future to remain abreast with the changing work and profile of the Parliaments. Presentations were made focusing future issues for Parliamentary Library and Research Services followed by intense workshop sessions. The main issues which were touched upon in this session included opening of parliamentary information to the public, quality management, keeping parliamentary record, digital preservation, presentation of complex information, etc.

A Knowledge Cafe was also organized during the Pre-Conference. According to the format followed in the Knowledge Café, opportunity was given to each participant to discuss a professional issue, gain insights and learn about potential solutions from the colleagues working in similar situations around the world. This was highly educative. It provided the managerial tools to address professional concerns.

In the IFLA General Conference and Assembly, there were few sessions relating to the Section of the Library and Research Services for Parliaments which proved to be quite beneficial. There were animated discussions about the future plan and direction for the work of the section and future events/ meetings. I participated in the Standing Committee meeting and made valuable suggestions, especially with regard to the topics for future discussions. Besides, I also actively participated in other sessions on the themes such as knowledge management, workplace learning, online resource sharing, etc.

I actively participated in all the sessions of the Conference. Besides making observations on the presentations made, I made significant interventions in order to get better insights into the practices obtaining in the Library and Research Services of other Parliaments. The Conference also offered vast scope for informal interactions with the colleagues in Library and Research set-ups of other Parliaments to share our respective concerns and practices.

Needless to mention, the opportunity to participate in the Pre-Conference has enriched my professional understanding, especially on the issues concerning parliamentary research. I greatly value the opportunity to learn about the best practices obtained in Research and Parliamentary Services of different parliaments. I look forward to more learning opportunities in future.

