

Asian Parliamentary Assembly

Secretariat



**Statement by
APA Secretary-General
M. H. Nejad Hosseinian
In the informal Meeting of the APA
at the Side of the 118th Assembly of the IPU
Cape Town, 16 April 2008**

In the Name of God

I am thankful to all of you for participating in this informal meeting of APA. I shall not fail to express my gratitude to IPU Secretary-General, Mr. Johnson and to the Parliament of South Africa the host of the 118th Assembly of the IPU for facilitating this informal meeting of the APA. I also wish to register thanks to Hojjat-ul-Islam, Mr. Hassan Aboutorabi, the President of APA Executive Council and the vice-Speaker of the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his continued support of the APA Secretariat and for his insight.

As I promised before, I plan to arrange an informal meeting of APA at the side of the IPU Assembly and with your support we will try to make it happen. I hope APA Member Parliaments would see fit to include one of their APA Delegates as a member of their delegations to the IPU Assembly.

The purpose of this meeting is to take stock of our past experience, exchange views on where the APA stands, its current activities and its prospect.

It has been a privilege for me to serve as the APA Secretary-General for the past several months and as the head of the Secretariat during the Presidency of Iran for nearly 15 months now. I do feel a strong sense of personal conviction to the principles and objectives of the APA. For this very reason the vision of greater integration in Asia does not seem to me a distant political or bureaucratic dream but the subject of a personal idealism that regards greater integration probable or even an imperative in this day and age of rapid change. It is an imperative if marginalization of some and further widening of the gap between and within countries that are among the main underlying causes of regional and global instability is to be avoided.

While the objective of greater integration is probable and maybe even imperative, it is certainly challenging to chart the territory towards it. It needs conviction and foresight on the part the APA Delegates who are the driving force of the effort; it needs political will, steadfastness, forbearance and continuity on the part of the Member Parliaments; and it needs dedication and professionalism on the part of the Secretariat staff to provide quality and timely service.

It is understood that APA is a nascent assembly of parliaments and it would take



some time to take such new organization off the ground. Nevertheless, I am convinced that we must make quick improvement in Secretariat communication with APA delegates. The Secretariat is not assured that its messages reach the delegates, because the feedback from the delegates to the secretariat is scarce. In response to repeated requests by the Secretariat for Member parliaments to appoint a focal point for communication, more than 60 percent of members did not respond. Less than 15 Member parliaments have identified a focal person. So still there is a possibility that the e-mails and Fax numbers that we have for some Member Parliaments may not be correct.

Therefore my first appeal to you is to provide us with the right address, e-mail and Fax and to appoint a focal person for communication if you have not yet done so.

In January 2008, and in accordance with resolutions of the Second session of the APA Plenary, I wrote to all Member Parliaments and sought their views on each of the six Plans of Actions. Views from Member Parliaments are to guide the Secretary-General to prepare the reports that the APA Resolutions have requested. I am sorry to report that after more than three months, the Secretariat has not received even one single substantive response from 40 Members.

My Second appeal to you is to see to it that the views of your parliaments on substantive issues are properly reflected to the Secretariat in order to enrich the debate on the Plans of Actions in the Sub-Committees.

In November 2008, the APA Plenary decided to establish six Sub-Committees to address six Plans of Actions. It also decided to request the Secretary-General to elaborate on ten other themes, some within ad hoc Committees or expert groups, like the important issue of enhancing efficient cooperation and coordination between APA and their respective governments.

I believe if we want to use the synergy of team work through networking, each Member Parliament should be encouraged to establish at least one working group of its own experts to study the proposals of the Secretary- General and advise their APA members accordingly. Otherwise, the input and the insight of few people may not be sufficiently broad to reflect the interests of all in Asia and to do justice to these important issues of mutual concern.

So, My third appeal to you is to encourage your colleagues at the parliaments to consider establishing a working committee of your best experts and take ownership of the issues at hand and develop the necessary priority and incentive within your parliaments and governments for proactive engagement with the agenda and mandate of the APA.

So far, five Member Parliaments; Afghanistan, Bahrain, Indonesia, Iraq and the Russian Federation have offered to host five Sub-Committees. Five other meetings have no hosts. Only one Sub-committee out of 10 committees has the required seven Member parliaments interested to participate.



Having expressed my concerns and expectation from our distinguished delegates, let me make some observations, briefing you about the developments since November 2008.

- 1- The permanent Secretariat has enjoyed the unreserved support of the parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran's Parliament has made a generous donation of about \$1,100,000.00 to the budget of the Secretariat. Arrangement is underway to offer the Secretariat the use of a spacious building that would house the Headquarters of the APA. I hope to be able to inaugurate the new Headquarters of the APA by holding the upcoming meeting of the Executive Council there.

In this context, I wish to draw attention of the distinguished delegates that it would be most appropriate to begin thinking of the added contribution that an international staff at the APA Secretariat could potentially make to the work of the APA.

In the meantime, the APA Secretariat welcomes voluntary contribution by other Member Parliaments, especially for furnishing the new building and for some APA programs and activities which would face bureaucratic difficulties and delays if they are to be carried out in the framework of the current government-approved budget for the APA Secretariat.

- 2- The Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran allocated a 3000.00 Euro-prize to the International Fajr Film Festival to be offered to a movie that has best promoted integration in Asia. In 2007, One Vietnamese producer won this prize at Fajr Film Festival in Iran. Iran has allocated two prizes for two movies representing integration in Asia for the next year's Fajr Film Festival.
- 3- The State Duma of the Russian Federation has offered to host the meeting of the Sub-Committee on "Integrated Energy Market in Asia." The meeting will take place on 15-16 May 2008 in Moscow.

As requested by the relevant APA Resolution, the Secretary-General will present to the meeting a brief report on the topic. The report is expected to be finalized before the end of April and will be forwarded to all members as early as possible.

The report will attempt to elaborate, albeit briefly and in general terms, each of the eleven operative paragraphs of the Plan of Actions that was adopted as an annex to the Resolution of Energy Standing Committee. These Actions aim to facilitate energy trade commensurate to Asia, and therefore, address all factors influencing production, transportation, trade and consumption with a view to ensuring security of supply and demand over the long term.

The plan of Action foresees consideration of establishment of an organization to deal with all these issues in an advisory and advocacy capacity. In view of the Secretariat, this must be a very small organization in which a group of highly



qualified experts who will be hired or seconded by the founding countries, using existing mechanisms and resources, to develop the best strategies to implement various aspects of the Plan of Action, taking into account the need of each country within the broader integrated picture of Asia.

Under paragraph 10 and 11 of the Plan of Actions which deal respectively with transit and transportation routes of energy in Asia, and with energy trade and exchange at lower cost, the report presents a concept on "Asian Gas Transmission Line." This concept (AGTL) focuses on combining the potentials of gas rich countries in West Asia and the CIS countries through a loop and associated pipeline to provide better and more secure services to one another and to their customers, primarily in East Asia. AGTL would serve the interests of participants in both the producing and consuming countries. The concept of "Trunkline Loop" for gas which was initially formulated by Chiyoda of Japan and UNIDO, is presented as an example, and other concepts may also be entertained. Other ideas and concepts for the trade of oil and other forms of energy may also be explored at some later stage.

I tend to think that there will be considerable interests on the part of the Member Parliaments to engage in deliberation of the issue of integrated Energy Market in Asia and of the concept of AGTL. The Sub-Committee will begin deliberation on this issue in the Moscow meeting on 15-16 May and likely continue it in a second meeting to be arranged subsequently.

- 4- Under paragraph 8 of the Plan of Action, the report proposes to establish in each member country and for Asia as a whole, a Fund to finance the investment of the projects that decreases the intensity of energy. The loan will be paid back by the savings in the cost of energy. The Secretariat suggests that the Sub-Committee consider recommending to the Plenary to utilize the services of a consultant firm or to establish one to identify the most appropriate new technologies for optimizing energy consumption in different industrial fields and to promote modernization of old factories based on their priority in energy saving. Lowering energy intensity is a critically important topic in industrial development of each and every Asian country. It is expected that the topic would draw great deal of interests from Member Parliaments.
- 5- The parliament of Indonesia has offered to host the sub-committee on "Alleviation of Poverty in Asia". This meeting is due to take place on 12-13 June 2008.
- 6- The Parliament of Afghanistan has offered to host the Sub-Committee on "globalization." The date for the meeting will be set subsequently.
- 7- The Parliament of Iraq had offered to host the Sub-Committee "Combating Corruption". The date for the meeting will be set subsequently.
- 8- The Parliament of Bahrain has offered to host the Sub-Committee on "Friendship Pact of Asia." Consultation is ongoing to finalize a date for this



meeting.

- 9- Another good news from Bahrain is that the distinguished delegate from Bahrain, Dr. Salah Ali Abdulrahman has been very generous with helping the Secretariat with translation of APA documents into Arabic. APA documents are now available also in Arabic and can be downloaded from the APA site at www.asianparliament.org.
- 10- No member Parliament has offered to host the ad hoc Committee on "Enhancing the efficient cooperation and coordination between APA Member parliaments and their Governments for Implementation of APA Decisions."

I wish to underline the critical importance of this subject as it deals with developing a structure for a closer partnership and coordination between APA and their governments for a more result-oriented agenda and mandate for the APA. APA decisions would become more likely to be implemented when they are developed, deliberated and agreed, taking into account the broader views including those of the governments concerned. The challenge before the APA is to seek the most efficient manner in which these plans of actions are to be implemented. The general understanding is that member parliaments of the APA wish to make a change towards greater cooperation and integration at the continent level.

The challenge before the APA is how to forge a workable partnership with the governments in which, on the one hand, the separation of powers is well respected, and APA decisions are implemented, on the other.

I hope we would soon have a volunteer Member Parliament to host this very important committee.

- 11- The Secretariat has received suggestions from several Islamic Member Parliaments to hold the first Executive Council meeting of 2008, which will take place in Tehran after the Holy Month of Ramadan, that is, in the second week of October. Arrangement is being made with Indonesia, the next APA President to hold the Plenary towards the end of November 2008. Under such circumstances, the period between the first Executive Council meeting and the second will be nearly two months. On the basis of Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure, the interval between the two Executive Council meetings shall normally be three months. The Secretariat will bring this point to the attention of all Member Parliaments and will proceed on the "no objection" basis.

Allow me to express my gratitude, once again, to all of you for participating in this informal meeting and to Honorable Aboutorabi, Honorable...for their statements and contribution. I look forward to listening to your comments and answering any questions you may have.