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II WORLD SUMMIT OF COMMITTEES OF THE FUTURE

Verbatim transcript of the session held on
25 May 2023

ATTENDANCE

Chair : Legislator Rodrigo Goñi Reyes (Chairman).

Members : Legislators Verónica Mato, Gloria Rodríguez and Carmen Sanguinetti Masjuan, and Legislators Sebastián Cal, Gustavo Olmos, Martín Melazzi and Álvaro Viviano.

Guests : Lydia Garrido (UNESCO), Ambassador Alejandro Garofali of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, María Gracia Delgado and Gabriel Botino (UNDP).

Secretaries : Vladimir De Bellis Martínez and María Elena Morán.

Deputy Secretary: Joseline Rattaro.

SPECIAL COMMISSION ON FUTURES

(Meeting held on 25 May 2023)

THE CHAIR (Rodrigo Goñi Reyes).— A quorum being present, the meeting is open.

(The time is 14 hours and 7 minutes)

—The Chair announces that the President of the General Assembly, Beatriz Argimón, despite her other commitments, informed us of her strong interest in attending this meeting. Its main purpose is to organize the World Summit of Committees of the Future, which, as you know, is the responsibility of the Uruguayan Parliament. Today we are exactly four months away from the event.

We have distributed two working documents to the legislators. One is entitled Second World Summit of the Committees of the Futures in Uruguay. Although its title is in English, the document is also available in Spanish and outlines the key issues concerning the event. The other document, entitled Parliaments Bring the Future into the Present, is a draft, like all our documents so far. It sets out a proposed agenda for the two days of the Summit.

For some time now, you have all had the “concept note,” available in Spanish, English and French, which we have already circulated worldwide. Every parliamentary delegation meeting with other parliaments has received it. It contains the title, objective, invitation from the President of the General Assembly, thematic focus—as you know, the democracy of the future in present reflection and action—and everything a concept note should contain. Of course, we still treat it as a draft, mainly because we are awaiting approval and, in a sense, further input from the IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), which, as you know, proposed co-organizing the Summit, and we accepted. So, under “Organizers,” the concept note lists “Parliament of Uruguay” and “Inter-Parliamentary Union.” Today, we also bring for consideration, in greater detail and as a draft proposal, another document setting out an agenda with presentations and workshops between the 25th and the 27th. It begins in the early evening of the 25th with the President of the Republic and other senior officials from international organizations. In principle, they are all invited, but the only attendance confirmed is that of the President of the Republic, who will give a welcome speech. This will be at approximately 18 hours on Monday the 25th.

Attendance by the President of the IPU —UIP in Spanish— and its Secretary-General is also confirmed; they too will give the opening welcome speech that day. It would be very good if Achim Steiner of UNDP and a senior UN official could join us, in addition to the President of the General Assembly: the first day would be

largely in their hands; the welcome reception and opening of the event will take place there.

Today, Lydia Garrido will give a very brief presentation, because we have half an hour or forty minutes before we must break, as some legislators need to leave to receive a Swiss delegation. Those able to stay can develop and discuss the proposed agenda. We have little time left to finalize it, especially because speakers and panelists have been identified for each session and most are from abroad. We must confirm their invitations, including the funding arrangements and everything else involved. It would therefore be helpful to leave today with a view on this proposed agenda, designed by Lydia Garrido in consultation with Finland and the IPU —by correspondence for now— which has so far approved everything. Turning to the first page of the material and its list of topics, remember that our event follows the one held in Helsinki: it would be the Second World Summit, continuing the first summit in Finland. We are simply continuing that work, as agreed and mandated in the declaration by the thirteen countries. We are therefore coordinating with the Finnish Parliament. Deputy Olmos and I had a very good meeting with the new leadership of Finland's Committee for the Future. Its chair had changed, so we needed to reestablish contact.

We also remind you —as stated in point 1C— that we are co-organizing this event with the IPU. We will therefore work in coordination, rather than simply as we please.

The second point concerns the Summit's structure and design —we will shortly consider Lydia Garrido's proposal— the concept note that we have all been circulating for some time, and identifying experts and speakers. We have identified and contacted about ten or twelve experts to establish their availability; this is what we need to decide.

The third point concerns the organizing and coordinating group. As agreed last week, we need a group that meets every week. It would include the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, the CEF members —Nane, Sanguinetti, Olmos, Cal and myself— Lydia Garrido, Ambassador Garófali, Carina Galvarisi, who is coordinating with the IPU, and a UNDP representative, whose identity they will confirm later. As I said, this group must meet at least weekly. Regarding activities and the timetable, one of the most urgent tasks, to be completed in the first half of June, is sending invitations to every parliament in the world. That is what we agreed. We will, of course, have considerable help from the IPU.

There is also the hiring of the event agency. If the President attends, I hope she will update us on that process. We are quite behind in selecting hotels and dinner venues and confirming experts and speakers. Four months before the event, we must either confirm their participation or release them from their commitments. Another important issue to settle today is forming a team of facilitators. There will be many workshops over those two days of the Summit — between fifteen and twenty— so we need facilitators able to carry out this task. They will need training and preparation on the various issues. There is also the question of language: since we cannot provide interpretation for the workshops, some will be in English and others in Spanish.

As for venues for Summit activities, we are currently considering the events hall and other rooms in the Legislative Palace.

Finally, I will address the important question of funding. We are naturally talking about a substantial amount. Parliament has decided to contribute, but its contribution will depend on what we obtain from other funders, supporters and partners, including the IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), the European Union, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and the World Bank. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the IDB and CAF (Corporación Andina de Fomento) have also expressed interest in participating and, of course, contributing. If there are no questions, we would ask Lydia Garrido to give an overview of the proposed agenda for the Summit's two and a half days, including its themes and headings, before we consider it point by point.

MS. GARRIDO (Lydia).— Good afternoon.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

I want to put into context the privilege and responsibility for Uruguay and Parliament of having the opportunity to organize this second world summit, with Finland passing the baton, so to speak. I understand that those who attended the first summit played a major role. Many committees in Latin America were interested, including Chile's, and there was complete agreement that Uruguay should organize it. Beyond the privilege and responsibility, I think this is an opportunity given the moment we are in, when it is imperative to demonstrate the importance of using the future in the present to address the major challenges we face.

This process has developed into the common thread of all our discussions under the broad heading The Democracy of the Future [...]. Deputies Olmos and Goñi also presented the subject in Lithuania, making an interesting case for this theme in the context of the rapid spread of technologies, including artificial intelligence. These technologies raise and challenge many questions concerning the very foundations of our

humanity in relation to this broad subject, while also making its links to multiple other issues visible. I will speak about the more technical aspects of the process we seek through this summit. Another overlapping challenge is methodological design, with a dual format: traditional panels with concise presentations and active moderation, followed by workshops drawing on those panels. Depending on the detailed design, there would be tables of seven, eight or ten people to interact, exchange experiences and generate knowledge collectively. Workshops would conclude with a plenary presenting each table's discussions. This explains Deputy Goñi's point about the importance of a facilitation team trained in advance.

As part of that support, the School of Government is offering a course on using the future in the present and on anticipatory capacities and competencies. This morning, I asked whether people were interested in joining the support team; more than half said yes. The idea is to draw on national, local and international support. We would do this online, remotely.

Another interesting aspect is that this allows us to develop internal capacities and competencies. A central aim of this design is for the experience—not just those two and a half days, but the whole process—to leave us with capacities for using the future. This means contextualizing our problems by considering not only their past and how they developed, but also the information the future offers us. This rests on three main elements: people, knowledge and processes, as a broad form of collective intelligence. Hence the proposal's strong emphasis on interaction.

With this in mind, the first afternoon would feature the more ceremonial welcome activities. The other two days would follow this format, morning and afternoon: panels followed immediately by workshops.

For the first day, broad contextual headings are suggested to illustrate the focus of both panels and workshops. The idea is to begin by highlighting the characteristics of the context, because what makes the difference is precisely its complexity, uncertainty, surprise and ambiguity. Think of emerging from covid, followed by the Russia–Ukraine war and now artificial intelligence: different kinds of situations, but all unexpected and generating interlinked problems that we find very difficult to address.

As a suggestion, the first panel would allow the international organizations supporting and participating in the event to

briefly present their main areas of work. You will see a proposal for the IPU to frame these within an era of change and a shift from reaction to anticipation. The focus must be on this paradigm shift: we cannot keep making decisions, regulating or taking other action only after events occur; we need to strengthen anticipation.

For the United Nations, the focus is on Our Common Agenda and, above all, next year's world summit and global pact. The Summit of Parliamentary Committees of the Future is particularly relevant because it would be the only such event before the United Nations summit and global pact activities. The idea is for this summit to produce recommendations and demonstrate the importance of parliaments worldwide in using the future in the present.

As I said, the themes assigned to each international organization are examples intended to allow them to complement one another.

The first morning would begin with panels featuring international organizations, as shown in the document, followed by a second part featuring parliaments through regional parliaments, as in Latin America and the European Union. We need to decide who could represent Africa and Asia Pacific. The idea is to represent all the major regions. I have omitted North America here.

On the first day —called day two in the document, because day one is the opening— the focus would be on anticipatory governance and its role in addressing change better and strengthening democracy. Suggested panelists work at the intersection of futures studies and decision-making or government.

On the second day of activities —day three— the focus would be on the transition from the AI we have known so far, technically called narrow artificial intelligence, to artificial general intelligence, which is what we are seeing with ChatGPT and these other forms of AI.

There is considerable concern about this, as I imagine you know. It is being discussed in the United States Congress, the European Parliament, networks of futures studies specialists and academia. Chomsky, for example, is very critical of these issues. Daniel Innerarity, who will be invited, has also been discussing them for some time. We therefore need reflection and local action coordinated with global action. Finally, on the afternoon of day three, we would consider practical applications: possible regulations or the start of discussions about regulation, the final declaration and recommendations.

The expected contribution of this event, which the II Summit organized by Uruguay's Parliament would propose, is a global network of parliamentary committees of the future. Finland began organizing these summits to highlight their importance. Uruguay would add: "Let us work collaboratively, in a coordinated and connected way."

I am available for any questions.

THE CHAIR.— Lydia referred to the dual format, thematic focus and presentations, but we would also like to know what the workshops would involve, since they accompany the presentations each morning and afternoon.

MS. GARRIDO (Lydia).— The workshops require intensive design. By that, I mean preparation: designing a process of collective intelligence. Much of the content, beyond these headings or main topics, will emerge during the event. The idea is for this interaction in small groups to take place immediately after the panels.

Groups generally have seven, eight or nine members so everyone can participate and exchange ideas. The number of participants will determine the number of small table groups, which will work from specific prompts developed in advance. These headings are not chosen arbitrarily: they are designed as a process moving from context into the specific question of anticipatory capacities and competencies, and what it means to bring the future into present decision-making. This then leads to more practical, concrete applications, such as regulatory and normative challenges, their interrelations, and opportunities technology might offer for certain problems.

Alongside this, there is the substantive content and its practical applications, with cross-fertilization among different experiences, capacities and competencies. Some delegations will have many years of experience using the future; others will have none, and others, like us, will be at an early or intermediate stage. This differs from Finland's summit, which focused on those with experience and an established institutional space. Uruguay's invitation is broader, more plural and diverse. We want participants to develop their own capacities—that is what I mean by internal or endogenous—rather than have an outside expert deliver a manual, recipe or step-by-step instructions. We want those capacities to become embedded in parliamentarians' own practice. That is why the invitation is more open. Several guests are suggested in the document, and there could be many more. We still need to invite some from Latin America, which would be

worth considering. I mean futures studies professionals who could help foster interaction with parliamentarians.

THE CHAIR.— An important point not included here is our current estimate of one hundred parliamentarians from about thirty parliaments. Most Latin American parliaments have confirmed attendance and participation, as has Canada, while the United States is in the process. At least eight or nine European parliaments have confirmed so far. Work is underway to bring three or four African parliaments, one of Uruguay's commitments. As for Asia Pacific, many countries do excellent work in this area, but there is a democratic issue — which I hope is understood correctly. Our focus is, of course, the democracy of the future; that is our thematic heading.

(The verbatim record is suspended)

—We are envisaging thirty parliaments and more than one hundred parliamentarians, plus approximately fifteen experts from abroad, with all the logistical and funding implications. A group from Uruguay's Parliament and Uruguayan experts —of whom there are excellent examples— will form a facilitation team. ANII (National Research and Innovation Agency), among other institutions, has explicitly expressed willingness to participate actively, especially by providing facilitators for the event's logistics.

I am somewhat concerned about timing. Those of us who went to Finland had agreed with Lithuania not to publicize our event widely before its Congress. That took place last week, so we have no excuses left. We must finalize our arrangements and confirm parliamentary participation: inviting people is one thing; getting them to attend is another. Follow-up is essential. We cannot simply rely on the IPU issuing invitations and everyone's goodwill. Another very positive development is that the IPU offered to inaugurate its Latin American regional office the day before or after the Summit. That would bring the IPU's full leadership, all parliamentarians from its President down, a substantial number of people. The President of the General Assembly, Beatriz Argimón, who is an IPU Vice-President, will coordinate the regional office. We are counting on that. But Deputy Olmos and I saw in Lithuania that countries attend because someone follows up with them: you have to contact them twenty times to confirm attendance.

Another difficulty is that July and August are holiday months in northern Europe. Invitations and expert confirmations not handled between now and 20 June will therefore be difficult to arrange later.

If we approve the points in this document, implementation must begin today. That is the proposal and the reason for this meeting.

The President of the General Assembly was invited because we are getting started. We must begin working with what we have.

MR. OLMOS (Gustavo).— I think the delay puts us in a risky position. Organizing an event of this nature, with such a range of panelists and delegations, requires an enormous effort.

In Finland, they told us they began sending invitations in December for an October event, ten months in advance. Unless we marshal every effort in the coming days, I do not think we will succeed. It is good that everyone here is involved and that the Ambassador is present as a link with the embassies, which will provide important help.

We also do not have much time to embellish the proposed agenda and working methods. Lydia Garrido has done good work. Unless someone sees something particularly concerning, I would move ahead very quickly with this and with confirming participation; otherwise, we risk not being ready.

Then there are all the organizational matters. We urgently need an event agency, hotels for participants and a clear inventory of available rooms. Lydia mentioned many workshops, but that requires many small rooms, perhaps like this one, where they can take place.

We must also address interpreting logistics. We need to decide whether to use the Chamber's plenary hall, which would seem most sensible, where the interpreters will sit, and what the booths will be like. A whole range of details needs urgent attention.

My proposal is therefore that, unless there are major objections —we have already had the material, but could take one more day to review it— we move ahead quickly with confirmations and begin developing Lydia Garrido's proposal. This requires further work to ensure productive workshops. Although it is not in the document, we must also consider the final product. After doing all this, what output will the event produce?

These matters require time and thought. The organizing and coordinating group must act immediately, follow up every issue and allocate tasks internally to overcome the substantial delay.

MR. MELAZZI (Martín).— One thing always concerns me about summits like this, and perhaps Lydia could explain it: what happens afterward? How do we continue?

One comment says “Post-Summit Follow-up,” which relates to a question I wanted to ask. Is follow-up an initiative of Uruguay's Parliament? We discuss fascinating issues, but afterward it would be good for all participating parliaments, including those joining each year, to contribute knowledge about their progress. This should cover not only what will be discussed in Uruguay but also what was addressed in Finland. I recall fourteen or fifteen topics, including longevity beyond 99 years, artificial meat, artificial intelligence, and the use and sound management of water quality. Uruguay's Parliament has progressed in all these areas. Sharing what was achieved and how would let us learn from one another. Otherwise, our work here remains an exchange of information, comparative law and so forth with other parliamentarians. That is all useful, but as parliaments advance on legislation, discussions at this, previous and future summits should be deposited somewhere so we can continue benefiting from them. I am not proposing an obligation, but a commitment to move in that direction.

THE CHAIR.— On page 5, Lydia and I used this as the title of workshop 4. In reality —and I think this is how we will proceed— the Final Declaration and Recommendations has a section at the end, and it would be useful to consider its direction, naturally in coordination with the other participants.

Based on discussions with other parliaments and the IPU, which brings together more than a hundred parliaments worldwide, the idea is a global parliamentary ecosystem addressing futures issues. Today's leading newspapers feature the main representatives of AI systems making statements in the United States and European Union. Leading industry figures now acknowledge that AI threatens democracy and society as we know them. This makes it a political issue at both micro and macro levels, beyond business, society or culture. The world's major legislatures are summoning the leaders responsible for AI systems. All parliaments must therefore take responsibility for permanent structures to address issues whose complexity and global scope require sustained work, rather than each parliament inventing its own approach. For two years, Europe has said daily, “Tomorrow we will approve the law on artificial intelligence,” yet that “tomorrow” has kept being postponed. Why? First, it is not easy; second, it presents new challenges every day. Everyone now acknowledges the famous black box: it is no longer paranoia but a recognized reality. I therefore think this will take shape in practice at the United Nations General Assembly in 2024.

The IPU has asked for this Summit to produce proposals and recommendations to establish that space, both within the IPU and globally.

Yes, Legislator Melazzi, addressing these issues at the highest level is now an unavoidable duty, and parliaments cannot be absent. That is where we are heading.

Lydia and I did not outline the recommendations because, in theory, they will emerge from those two days' work. They will arise naturally, and we all know that preparation also begins in coordination with the other participants at least several weeks beforehand. In Lithuania, as in Finland, a declaration with recommendations was already circulating on the morning of the final day. This time, however, it also involves creating more permanent structures.

MS. GARRIDO (Lydia).— Deputy Olmos is not here at the moment, but regarding his comments about delays, I would note that this work has drawn since December on discussions with the IPU and its recommendations. They offered suggestions based on their own work. The same happened during January's Futures Congress in Chile, attended by several deputies and senators, and in discussions with Finland's Committee for the Future. We held several meetings and received their detailed organizational timetable and subsequent comments. The work also draws on other discussions and contacts with the OECD, including specific groups addressing these issues in governments and with the European Parliament.

The Lithuanian Congress also contributed to the process that produced our current documents.

Finally, we contributed a futures-focused module to the course proposed at the Parlatino. There, I spoke with its Vice-President or Alternate President, Rolando González of Cuba. We had a long, very interesting discussion, with complete agreement and willingness from the Parlatino to support this activity and the use of the future in decision-making. The same happened with its technical adviser, Alfredo Jiménez, a three-time Parlatino President. They were extremely enthusiastic about Uruguay's summit initiative.

Deputies Sebastián Cal, Nicolás Viera and Pablo Viana also attended those meetings in Panama. They have interacted with other Latin American parliamentarians, and there is considerable interest in participating and in the subject. I mention this to show that interest, work and interaction already exist, although still somewhat disconnected. They could quickly become a substantial basis for work on concrete, defined organizational tasks.

MS. SANGUINETTI (Carmen).— I agree that we probably have little room for creative changes to the proposal. But I want to raise a concern I expressed earlier, which seems even more important after these years of work: how the Futures Commission and its work influence the rest of Uruguay's Parliament, and, I think, other parliaments too. Sometimes we encounter difficult realities when proposing changes to the status quo or to the idea that “we have always done it this way.” This is a more practical, tangible, everyday dimension of the subject, but I think it remains unfinished business for the Futures Commission. That, at least, is my view. I am not necessarily proposing this as a theme. I am saying that we hear all these fascinating ideas and see an enormous gap between them and our everyday work.

We therefore need to consider these matters. By the end of the Futures Commission's working period, alongside these fascinating issues that are clearly essential to its agenda, the other aspects should also be incorporated. That is my view.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR.— I think the major challenge, also raised in Lithuania, is to embed this anticipatory perspective in the rest of parliamentary work. That is another of our objectives.

We can keep considering this; sometimes objectives need to be written down. They are included in one of the documents. At the end of page 8, the expected contributions of the II Summit are discussed. We can clarify, consolidate and emphasize Senator Sanguinetti's point there. We want it included. We fully agree that this perspective and new way of legislating should spread, without excluding the previous approach. New times require a paradigm shift, as we said in Lithuania.

MR. GARÓFALI (Alejandro).— May I?

I apologize, but I must leave.

Thank you for inviting me. I am entirely available for whatever discussions this issue requires. We have already been working on it for some time.

THE CHAIR.— The Commission thanks you for attending.

(Ambassador Alejandro Garófali leaves the room)

—If we can approve at least the broad outlines proposed for the Summit, recognizing that we are racing against time, we would begin work.

Other Summit-related activities will arise, and we naturally count on all Commission members for them.

We also need to complete the work on the future of work and the work of the future. Senator Gloria Rodríguez was preparing the fifth driver, concerning longevity. At some point, we should make an effort to hold a half-day or full-day session on this important issue, complete this stage and produce the final report in 2023.

MS. RODRÍGUEZ (Gloria).— We are already working on the future of work and the work of the future. We are preparing an event to address long-lived societies and what is known as the “silver economy.”

We agree with the Chair on holding a half-day or full-day event with national leaders on the subject. We considered inviting economist Enrique Iglesias, who has the Astur Foundation, Daniel Rossman of Tata, and an Endeavor representative, given the importance of its work. If you agree, we could convene it in July or August. This remains unfinished business, but we are ready to address it.

MS. SANGUINETTI (Carmen).— I understand that Rossman would be invited in connection with the Fundación Seniors, because that is what he is working on.

We should also invite Ana Castillo of the Inter-American Development Bank and an expert on this subject who visited recently. I cannot remember her name, but I undertake to provide the information, because she is working precisely in this area.

THE CHAIR.— I think this would allow us to complete the work left unfinished last year because we ran out of time. We received very positive feedback on our first, preliminary report. It identified longevity as a driver of change, but we could not develop that topic.

If you agree, then, we will make time to address it.

We thank the senator entrusted by the Commission with coordinating this, and anyone wishing to join her in finding a day in July to meet. We could incorporate this work without distracting from the Summit, especially because 2024, as we know, is an election year.

(Discussion)

—The working session would therefore take place in the second half of July.

MR. BOTTINO (Gabriel).— On behalf of UNDP, I simply wish to thank you for the opportunity to join this meeting, which keeps us informed about preparations. We are available to assist with both logistics and technical matters.

We are also beginning an internal workstream on artificial intelligence that could contribute to any of the discussion tables Lydia mentioned. We can examine it later; you will know how best to use it.

Operationally, as always, we are available to support and work alongside you to ensure a successful outcome. We are confident that we will achieve it.

MS. GARRIDO (Lydia).— Senator Carmen Sanguinetti raised something I consider extremely important.

I will also recall the course being developed by Parliament's School of Government, which has been very interesting from my perspective. Senators and deputies enrolled. In the last two months, the course coincided with intense parliamentary debates. Consequently, those sharing their offices —secretaries and advisers— continued participating. This intermediate level of parliamentary work has proved very interesting, with practical applications to issues that senators and deputies are addressing. It could offer a parallel path, another option for using the future to frame problems and make decisions here and now.

The process has been very interesting. We have held six or seven sessions. Participants recognize a qualitative change from day zero to today. When asked whether anyone would be interested in joining a support team, eleven participants immediately raised their hands and said yes.

This could therefore be a route for Uruguay's Parliament, alongside the more specialized work in the Futures Commission and elsewhere, to create synergies.

MR. VIVIANO (Álvaro).— It is a kind of volunteering.

MS. GARRIDO (Lydia).— It is volunteering through learning, which they find interesting.

Some participants knew nothing about artificial intelligence and are now incorporating it, connecting it to different problems and learning how to address it. This could therefore be a form of support.

THE CHAIR.— If we agree, the final deadline would be next week, because we must translate the concept note into three languages, which has a cost. It includes everything: invitations, themes, participants, contributions, objectives and so on. It is eight pages. Naturally, there is also a letter from the Futures Commission explaining the invitation.

Second, please review the agenda and its proposed topics and headings. We need to begin making decisions, especially because the experts we bring must have a clear agenda and will also entail costs.

We have identified established experts; we are not making this up. They have different perspectives, including ideological ones, but are committed to serious, professional work. They come from different countries and were identified at the summits. Everyone listed has expressed willingness to participate. Suggestions for other experts on the subject are welcome. Third, starting next week, the group will hold an open weekly meeting to begin meeting the deadlines. We are confident we can do so.

Finally, the concept note in English and Spanish and the final invitation will be distributed. Beginning tomorrow, the invitation will go out *urbi et orbi*, inviting everyone.

There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned.

(The time is 15 hours and 15 minutes)

