



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Declaration

Placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development: Building the world the people want

(1) We live in extraordinary times. We need equally extraordinary efforts to build a world where every man, woman and child is safe from war and conflict, free from poverty and hunger, where they are able to meet their needs and realize their human potential while preserving our planet for future generations, and where their rights, freedoms and dignity are fully respected.

(2) Parliament is the central institution of democracy through which the will of the people is expressed. We, the Speakers of the world's parliaments, have convened at the United Nations in New York to give voice to their concerns and demonstrate our resolve to play our part in meeting the global challenges before us.

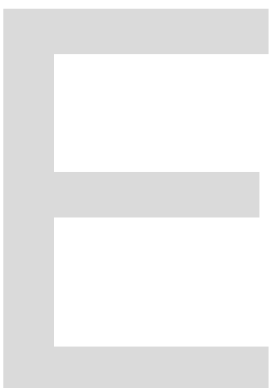
(3) As we adopt this Declaration we are mindful of the unique responsibilities and constitutional mandates of our parliaments to make the laws that implement international agreements and to hold governments and international institutions to account for their full realization. Cognizant of our diverse traditions and unique parliamentary histories and practices, it is our ambition to provide a concrete democratic dimension to collective efforts aimed at creating a better world.

Our world today

(4) In spite of progress in the areas of democracy, peace and development, we continue to live in an unstable world. War and conflict, often characterized by extreme brutality, are a daily reality in many places. Millions of people, primarily women and children die, are injured and displaced or forced to flee in dramatic conditions. In some regions of the world, we still witness democratic backsliding.

(5) Peace and security are prerequisites for democracy and sustainable development. We call for much greater efforts to be deployed in solving conflicts through political dialogue and negotiations, with full respect for international law and by addressing the root causes of the conflict. We offer to place more emphasis on parliamentary diplomacy, which has demonstrated its ability to provide impetus to efforts aimed at resolving differences and conflicts.

(6) We witness horrendous terrorist acts in every part of the globe. New terrorist groups are emerging with substantial resources at their disposal. Unfortunately, many of these terrorist acts are perpetrated by fundamentalist groups purporting to act in the name of religion. We condemn all forms and manifestations of terrorism, irrespective of their perpetrators and motives, as well as radicalization, violent extremism and their means of financing.



(7) Our parliaments will do their utmost to enhance effective cooperation and support implementation of all relevant UN resolutions and international conventions and agreements to combat terrorism and contribute to the adoption of a coherent security policy at the international level. We pay tribute to the innocent victims of barbaric terrorist acts throughout the world and express our solidarity with them.

(8) Much more needs to be and can be done to prevent and reduce the risk of violence. We call for greater efforts to achieve a nuclear weapons free world. We want to see a real reduction in the proliferation of all weapons. We call for urgent action, including robust legislation, to tackle new security threats and to combat organized crime linked to human trafficking, drugs and the illegal arms trade, kidnappings and extortion, and associated money laundering and corruption.

(9) Millions of women and girls in every region of the world are subjected to all forms of violence, including physical, sexual and domestic violence, every day. We call on all countries to prioritize the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence now. There is an equally urgent need to put an end to widespread hatred and discrimination in all forms. We urge all countries to foster intercultural dialogue and to focus on promoting and tolerant and inclusive societies where people are respectful of each other's culture, religion and traditions. This should not run counter to efforts aimed at combating gender-based discrimination.

(10) Migration, whether forced or voluntary, is a fixture of today's world. People can and will move to other places in search of a better life. When they are forced to do so because their life is under threat the international community has an obligation to provide support. We are appalled at the countless human tragedies unfolding as people flee wars, conflict, natural and human disasters. We call on all States to protect refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants and to help build stable and prosperous societies in their countries of origin. In this context, it is important to work together to curb human smuggling and trafficking, as well as to strengthen cooperation to address the root causes of migration.

(11) Despite global advances in technology, health, knowledge and material wealth, longstanding economic and social disparities are increasing. There are vast inequalities in terms of income and living conditions in the world and billions of people are living in poverty, which erodes the social contract that is essential for democratic life and human progress everywhere. We are witnessing a steady degradation of our environment and climate change is today a reality. We urge our countries to reach agreements that take fully into account the Rio principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

(12) These agreements should ensure a shared prosperity while protecting our environment and effectively addressing climate change. They should focus on both adaptation and mitigation and be coupled with sufficient resources for effective implementation. Our parliaments stand ready to support the implementation of these agreements, as we do with respect to the commitments on disaster risk reduction and promoting a culture of prevention and risk resilience.

(13) The Internet is strongly influencing our world, spurring innovation and communication within and between countries. It is also a vital tool to foster citizens' participation in the democratic process. Cooperation between all stakeholders – Internet users, the private sector, civil society, the technological community, governments and international organizations – has helped foster an online environment in which all societies stand to benefit. However, too many people, especially women, still lack access to the Internet and more must be done to bridge the digital divide and ensure our citizens are able to harness the benefits of connectivity. We must also strive to ensure that rights are respected on the Internet and that it remains a space for debate and discussion, free from excessive commercialization and undue regulations aimed at limiting fundamental freedoms agreed internationally.

(14) In all of this, we need to rededicate ourselves to the rule of law. Our parliaments should assist in ensuring that the rule of law is upheld and all have equal access to justice. We call for greater commitment to international law and propose to pay particular attention to respect for human rights and international humanitarian law while supporting international justice mechanisms and efforts to end impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes.

Democracy

(15) We reaffirm the principles of the *Universal Declaration on Democracy*. In this sense, our parliaments are sovereign and independent national institutions. They are marked by the history and cultural heritage of our countries and each one is different. Yet, they share the same ambition to ensure that the will of the people forms the basis of government. Participation in political life and public decision-making is an entitlement and is crucial to development. When people are left voiceless or excluded, their well-being is undermined and democracy is left wanting.

(16) We call for greater efforts to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls with a view to achieving their empowerment and making gender equality a reality. Development of our societies and economies hinges on the enjoyment, by women and men, girls and boys, of full and equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. We must rededicate ourselves to the full realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by 2030. We deplore the excruciatingly slow progress in securing a greater presence of women in parliament and commit to redoubling our efforts to reach, as a global average, the internationally agreed target of 30 per cent of women members in parliament by 2020.

(17) There is an apparent disconnect between the way we do politics and the way people live today. The connectivity and immediacy that characterize their lives seem far removed from national political processes. Young people in particular are calling for greater engagement, openness, transparency, accountability and effectiveness in politics. We must be ambitious and halt the tide of young people opting out of civil society and democratic institutions; we must better harness their energy and creativity in the service of communities and societies as a whole. We have seen how young people have been at the forefront of many pro-democracy movements.

(18) We pledge to do our utmost to make politics genuinely open to young people and to facilitate their election to parliament in greater numbers. We also pledge to address youth marginalization by engaging youth in politics and facilitating their access to education throughout their lifetime and to the job market. These may prove to be effective ways of also preventing them from turning to violence and conflict and from being recruited by terrorist groups.

(19) Minorities and indigenous peoples are the most vulnerable members of many of our societies and remain excluded from making decisions that affect their lives and the future of our countries. We affirm that they have an inalienable right to full and equal membership of each of our nations, which has to be translated into public policies that are sensitive to their situation, needs, and aspirations and accompanied by sufficient resources. We call for measures to be taken to ensure their effective participation at all levels of public life.

(20) We recognize the multiple challenges facing many of our parliaments today. We are concerned by public scepticism and a disconnect with politics, an unequal power relationship with the executive, difficulties in influencing decisions that are increasingly taken in international forums or outside government, and limited means at our disposal to increase institutional capacity in parliament. Supporting the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, we commit to working to tackle these challenges, respecting the role of traditional media, making greater use of social media and modern information and communication technologies (ICTs), and rendering our parliaments fit for purpose for the 21st century.

(21) We will do our utmost to bring parliament closer to the people and we renew our pledge to make our parliaments ever more representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective, enabling the diverse components of society to participate in politics. To this end, we reiterate the importance of free and fair elections held at regular intervals, on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot. We also reiterate the importance of creating and maintaining, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for civil society. We recognize the progress that is being made by many parliaments towards democratization, as well as the setbacks experienced in several other countries, and we commit to continuing to assist each other in further promoting parliamentary democracy. We commend the recently adopted *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments* and recommend that all parliaments and relevant organizations endorse and be guided by them.

(22) We encourage the constitutional and institutional reforms underway in countries in transition to democracy. We underscore the importance of providing political and economic support to these countries in order to ensure that democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and social justice take root in a sustainable manner. Supporting economic development is indispensable for fledgling democracies to succeed, including through the conversion of these countries' debts into investments.

Sustainable development

(23) The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have provided a welcome focus for global efforts to improve peoples' lives. However, progress has been uneven between regions and countries and wide gaps remain. Some countries have reached many of the goals while others have for a variety of reasons fallen short of the targets. Many peoples' lives have been saved and improved, data has been collected, techniques and tools developed and many important lessons learned. Today, the global community is poised to launch a post-2015 development agenda that is broader in scope and that builds on the experience of the MDGs, tackling both poverty eradication and sustainable development, and applied universally to all countries.

(24) We welcome the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that has emerged with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Poverty eradication is the overarching objective of this new agenda, alongside the promotion of economic, social and environmental development. These objectives can only be achieved by changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, building resilient infrastructure, fostering innovation, protecting and better managing natural resources, as well as revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development.

(25) We applaud the ambition of this agenda to be transformative and leave no-one behind, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. Indeed, to be successful, sustainable development has to place human beings at the centre of decisions. It has to aim at achieving their well-being with full respect for environmental limitations. It needs to be owned by the people and it requires their full participation. People are individuals endowed with rights and responsibilities towards each other and towards the environment. We must all invest in them as our most important resource.

(26) We welcome the goal and call for greater efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, as well as the goal to address inequalities. We applaud the inclusion of a goal calling for urgent action against climate change that also encompasses disaster risk reduction. We welcome the broad-based goal on the means of implementation - finance, trade, technology, capacity building and systemic reforms - that must be mobilized in support of the new agenda.

(27) We commend the inclusion of a goal to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Good governance at all levels is an enabler of development and an objective in its own right for all countries. We commit to reach this goal in our countries and in our parliaments. In the process, parliaments will need to enhance their ability and capacity to ensure accountability for results, including in terms of promoting greater financial responsibility and transparency.

(28) While governments are finalizing the new agreements on sustainable development, financing for development, climate change and disaster risk reduction, we underscore the importance of achieving one harmonious global agenda. It is fundamental to the success of the endeavour. Without it we will not be able to achieve coherence and complementarity among the many actors who will be called upon to take part in the implementation process at the local, national and global levels or guarantee the most optimal use of available resources.

(29) We recognize the important responsibilities that are incumbent on parliaments to ensure implementation of the new SDGs. As Speakers, we are ready to do everything in our power to facilitate the consideration of relevant legislation and allocation of budgetary resources, and to hold governments accountable for the attainment of the goals. We will draw from a vast catalogue of actions to help build public awareness and national ownership, strengthen coherence within and between national and local administration and parliament, facilitate citizen involvement and evaluate and report on progress.

International cooperation

(30) We are convinced that the United Nations must remain the cornerstone of global cooperation and we take this opportunity to renew our solemn pledge in support of the Organization as it celebrates its 70th anniversary and the victory of the world over fascism and Nazism. The UN embodies the ardent hope of people around the world for peace and development. Its 70th anniversary therefore provides an important opportunity for the international community to reflect on its history, look ahead to the future and move forward, in order to turn the vision of the UN Charter into reality.

(31) We call on UN Member States to equip their Organization for the challenges of the 21st century. We commend the many reforms that have taken place over the past decade. Important challenges remain, however, that require urgent action. We remain concerned over the ability of the Security Council to better deliver on its primary responsibilities of maintaining international peace and security under the UN Charter. We believe that the effectiveness of the Security Council can only be improved through urgent reform to reflect contemporary global realities.

(32) Fifteen years ago, our First Speakers' Conference took place on the eve of the Millennium Summit. On that occasion we presented our vision for providing a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation. We take pride in the considerable progress that has been achieved since then; clearly, there is today growing interaction between the United Nations and the world of parliaments.

(33) We remain convinced that parliaments can do more to help bridge the democracy gap in international relations and secure global democratic accountability for the common good. We reiterate the recommendations we formulated at our conferences in 2005 and 2010. We regard the post-2015 development agenda as a unique opportunity to enhance substantially the cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations. We encourage UN Member States to set out an ambitious vision for this cooperation in the final documents.

(34) We reiterate that our cooperation must be firmly rooted in the work we carry out in our national parliaments, much of which relates to ensuring accountability. Our parliaments must be more active in international affairs by contributing to and monitoring international negotiations, overseeing the enforcement of agreements that have been reached by governments and ensuring national compliance with international law. Similarly, parliaments must be more vigilant in scrutinizing the activities of international organizations and providing input into their deliberations.

(35) We take pride in our Organization - the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We reiterate that, as the world organization of parliaments, the IPU is the international body best suited to help build the relationship between parliaments and the United Nations. We have confidence in the IPU, which is playing this role increasingly. We recommend that its capacity be strengthened to cope with the substantial responsibilities that come with the post-2015 development agenda.

(36) We encourage the IPU and the United Nations to continue to expand their cooperation, particularly in implementing the agreed Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the post-2015 development agenda to be adopted in September 2015 and the Climate Change Agreement to be concluded in December 2015. These interlocking and mutually reinforcing processes, coupled with respective means of implementation, are critical for the future the people want. We express the hope that both organizations can conclude a new cooperation agreement that reflects the gains that have been made since our first Conference and provides a firm footing for our future work together.

(37) We remain optimistic about the road ahead. The negotiations to secure agreement on a new development agenda are ample proof of a shared global commitment to address today's global challenges. Here is a unique opportunity for all of us to work together. We will support strongly in each of our countries the necessary action by all relevant authorities to establish mechanisms for tracking and monitoring progress and we call on the IPU to facilitate the achievement of this objective and ensure reporting.

(38) We, in our parliaments, will do our part by placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development for the world the people want.