



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

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**Resolution adopted unanimously by the 111<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly  
(Geneva, 1 October 2004)**

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN PRESERVING BIODIVERSITY

The 111<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

*Recalling the:*

- International Plant Protection Convention, 1951;
- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands), 1971;
- Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1972;
- Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972;
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, 1973;
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, 1979;
- Establishment of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, 1982;
- World Charter for Nature, 1982;
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982;
- International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, 1983 (superseded by the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, 2001);
- Report of the World Commission on the Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, 1987;
- Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992;
- Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992;
- Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2000; and
- Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), 2002,

*Also recalling* the:

- Council of Europe Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, 1979;
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, 1991, and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, 2003; and
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, 1998,

*Recognising* that biodiversity – variability within and among living organisms and the systems they inhabit – is critical to the survival of the planet and the species that inhabit it as humankind has known them,

*Convinced* that an improved public understanding of the term "biodiversity", as used in the Convention on Biological Diversity, will heighten its practical use in some national and local conservation strategies,

*Acknowledging* the work of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) aimed at the difficult task of establishing the status of global biodiversity,

*Recognising* that the conservation of biodiversity is a prerequisite for sustainable development insofar as such efforts are vital for poverty alleviation, food security, the provision of fresh water, biomass energy, soil conservation and human health,

*Stressing* the importance of protected areas such as biosphere reserves – including transboundary biosphere reserves – in achieving the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity,

*Acknowledging*, in this respect, the role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Man and the Biosphere Programme and the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves in promoting the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity,

*Recalling* that the current rate of biodiversity loss represents the first significant extinction event caused by human activity in the Earth's history,

*Recognising* that the Convention on Biological Diversity is the principal international instrument addressing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity,

*Noting* that the Convention on Biological Diversity does not clearly refer to the core causes of biodiversity loss, including inter alia population growth and unsustainable production and consumption patterns,

*Also noting* that the greatest threats to biodiversity resulting from human activity are habitat loss and deterioration, climate change, invasive alien species, over-exploitation and pollution,

*Aware* that under the Convention on Biological Diversity, States have sovereign rights over their biological resources,

*Underscoring* that in a transboundary context the sound management of natural resources and the preservation of biodiversity and ecological balance require consultations and the full cooperation and coordination of efforts between neighbouring States, within the applicable international, regional and bilateral legal frameworks,

*Recalling* the commitments undertaken at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity aimed at reducing significantly the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010,

*Also recalling* in particular the programme of work on protected areas adopted during the Seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity,

*Further recalling* that biodiversity conservation must go beyond in situ conservation efforts in protected areas, and that such efforts are by themselves insufficient to stem the loss of biodiversity,

*Noting* that the goods and services provided by ecosystems are not taken into account by conventional econometric methods,

*Recalling* paragraph 44(r) of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development aimed in particular at enhancing synergy and mutual supportiveness between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the policies and international trade agreements of the World Trade Organization,

*Considering* the Policy Statement adopted on 16 May 2002 at the High-Level Meeting of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, on the need to integrate the Rio Conventions into cooperation activities for development,

*Recalling* the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity,

*Reaffirming* that the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources is one of the central objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity,

*Concerned* that the commercialisation of biodiversity may perpetuate historically inequitable relationships between the developed and developing countries (including States with tropical forests), and *aware* that the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is the forum which considers these issues and endeavours to find workable and equitable solutions,

*Noting* that providers of genetic resources and traditional knowledge have limited means with which to prevent their misuse by multinational corporations and that, to address these shortcomings, existing mechanisms must be implemented and

further developed, including national legislation, the Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising out of their Utilisation (adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity) and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture,

*Observing* that while a number of States require assistance to safeguard, through ex situ measures, elements of their biodiversity, for example through the maintenance of seed banks, only a few (10) have to date called upon the services of the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute,

*Noting with alarm* the drastic impact that human activity has had on the biodiversity of inland waters and ocean systems that are beyond the jurisdiction of individual governments,

*Stressing* the need for a comprehensive and accurate environmental impact assessment to be conducted before any project is undertaken that may affect biodiversity,

*Recognising* the importance of the close link between environmental diversity and sustainable development questions, in ensuring a healthy life for present and future generations,

*Concerned* that world leaders have neither given adequate political priority to biodiversity, nor adequately funded relevant international organisations such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),

*Also concerned* at the lack of international public awareness of the consequences of biodiversity loss for people in general and in developing countries in particular,

1. *Calls on* States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, as well as the other biodiversity-related treaties and agreements adopted at the international and regional levels;
2. *Calls on* governments to take more effective action in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in order to achieve the target set by the World Summit on Sustainable Development of reducing significantly the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010;
3. *Encourages* governments to implement effectively international and regional agreements related to biodiversity and to improve coordination in order better to meet the goals of the Convention;
4. *Recommends* that all States foster cooperation among the countries in their regions that share transboundary resources, in the interest of the conservation of biodiversity, through the sharing and exchanging of information and knowledge about the preservation and retention of such resources;

5. *Calls for* coordinated action by the countries concerned with a view to protecting natural habitats situated in border areas, particularly transboundary biosphere reserves, in conformity with the multilateral and bilateral agreements and legally binding instruments to which they are party;
6. *Urges* these countries to notify and consult with each other on projects that might have adverse effects on shared natural resources, and to make sure that comprehensive environmental impact assessments are conducted before such projects are implemented, in accordance with international standards, including appropriate public consultation and an evaluation of the transboundary impact;
7. *Urges* governments to focus their efforts on the immediate implementation of the programme of work on protected areas, with a view to establishing, by 2010 in terrestrial areas and by 2012 in marine areas, comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically representative national and regional systems of protected areas;
8. *Recommends* that governments recognise inter alia population growth and unsustainable production and consumption patterns as core causes of biodiversity loss;
9. *Urges* governments to address the mechanisms of biodiversity loss, inter alia by examining and coordinating methods to reduce habitat loss and deterioration, by monitoring and eliminating invasive alien species and by addressing climate change by fully and effectively implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, and other international agreements;
10. *Recommends* that all States do their utmost to conserve their biodiversity, using in situ and ex situ methods where appropriate, and that they apply for the assistance of the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute;
11. *Calls on* governments to take more effective action in general in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity, through existing and functioning thematic programmes and intersectoral activities, by:
  - Fostering the ecosystem approach developed by the Convention on Biological Diversity as a key concept for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way; and
  - Incorporating the objectives of biodiversity conservation in all sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, forest management, water management, tourism and transportation;
12. *Encourages* governments to commit themselves to the establishment of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits;

13. *Also encourages* governments to carry out cooperation in biodiversity conservation, and *invites* international organisations and developed countries to take concrete action in helping developing countries in this regard, through financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity-building;
14. *Urges* governments to give full consideration in their trade policies to the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, recognising the objective of mutual supportiveness of trade and environmental protection agreements in achieving sustainable development;
15. *Calls on* parties and governments to strengthen their efforts at all levels for the full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, in particular through increased allocations of the human, financial and technical resources required, both in developed and developing countries;
16. *Also calls on* governments to develop and coordinate efforts to reduce significantly the loss of biodiversity in ocean and sea areas beyond national jurisdiction;
17. *Further calls on* parliaments to take action aimed at:
  - Assessing the economic and social benefits associated with the sound management of ecosystems, with a view to incorporating the economic and social value of goods and services provided by biodiversity in decisions involving public finance, policy, planning, and natural resource management;
  - Developing appropriate and country-specific economic and social incentives to foster the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, bearing in mind local factors which influence biodiversity;
  - Eliminating or reducing policies and practices that produce incentives leading to biodiversity loss or deterioration;
  - Ensuring that the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity are integrated into national sectoral and cross-sectoral programmes and policies;
  - Updating and developing, where needed, the legal framework which relates to the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;
  - Promoting the necessary mechanisms to allow input from civil society organisations and special interest groups in the decision-making process related to biodiversity;
  - Increasing knowledge, understanding and awareness, among civil society and decision-makers, of the relationship between conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity on the one hand, and economic growth and social welfare on the other;

18. *Undertakes* to develop inter-parliamentary cooperation as a means to promote international partnership in support of effective preservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity worldwide;
19. *Recommends* that special committees be established for environmental affairs in parliaments where such committees do not yet exist, addressing conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity;
20. *Calls on* governments to strengthen the Global Environment Facility;
21. *Recommends* that governments monitor and report on progress made in reaching the 2010 target for the reduction of biodiversity loss;
22. *Calls on* governments to promote coherent international environmental governance, including increased cooperation and harmonisation between relevant organisations, programmes and conventions, in order to avoid overlapping and achieve synergies.