



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

**Resolution adopted unanimously by the 113th IPU Assembly
(Geneva, 19 October 2005)**

THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF PARLIAMENT AND THE MEDIA IN PROVIDING
THE PUBLIC WITH IMPARTIAL, ACCURATE AND VERIFIABLE
INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY ON ARMED CONFLICTS AND THE STRUGGLE
AGAINST TERRORISM*

The 113th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Observing that armed conflicts and terrorism constitute serious threats to international peace and security,

Recognizing the need to prevent and counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations,

Underlining the need for increased cooperation and common understanding in the fight against terrorism, and *noting* the call made by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his March 2005 report entitled *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all* (A/59/2005) for the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on terrorism before the end of the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly,

Further recalling the conclusions of the Declaration entitled Bridging the democracy gap in international relations: A stronger role for parliaments, adopted by consensus at the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments (New York, 7 to 9 September 2005), on the need to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism and to agree upon an internationally accepted definition of terrorism,

Recalling that the IPU, through the resolutions it adopted at the 95th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Istanbul in 1996, at the 105th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Havana in 2001, and at the 107th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Marrakech in 2002, has inter alia condemned international terrorism as a danger to the social and political stability of States, a threat to the global development of democratic structures, and an assault on the safety and individual freedoms of citizens, and has called upon all States to adopt appropriate measures to tackle the problem of terrorism and its social, political and economic causes,

* Resolution adopted unanimously, with the revised title, as proposed by the Standing Committee.

Recalling further United Nations Security Council resolutions on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts,

Stressing the need to combat the threat posed by international terrorism to world peace and international security by all means, and in conformity with the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and applicable United Nations human rights conventions,

Acknowledging the need to respect international law and the inviolability of life, including the need to guard against suicide bombers,

Recognizing that it is every bit as imperative to prevent the causes of terrorism as it is to combat it, and that this is the role of governments, parliaments and, indirectly, of the media,

Conscious that terrorist acts are largely intended to shatter the structures and cohesion of civil society, which must respond to this assault on its values without compromising its openness, its humanity, or its commitment to human rights and individuals' rights and freedoms,

Encouraging the governments and parliaments of countries confronted with internal armed conflicts or situations of terrorism to take all the constitutional measures necessary in order to halt the violence, restore social cohesion and consolidate peace and reconciliation within their populations, and *welcoming* the initiatives already taken to this effect in some countries,

Recognizing that the struggle against the new kind of pandemic that terrorism represents for humankind must be global, and must involve the entire international community as a community of values and hope, for if terrorism no longer has any frontiers, and if it has applied to its benefit the very principles of globalization, the strategy to combat it must also be global, involving close cooperation between governments that must act in concert, between parliaments and between civil society actors,

Noting that the attitude of parliaments to combating domestic and international terrorism must be firm and rigorous, and that no cause can justify the use of terrorism, which, as it targets innocent people, is a crime against humanity, and *calling upon* parliamentarians to abstain from any action in their official or personal capacity likely to promote, support or assist in terrorists' attempts to obtain publicity and further their causes,

Also drawing attention to the fact that parliaments, by enacting the necessary legislation, overseeing its implementation and allocating adequate financial resources, play a crucial role in the prevention and avoidance of armed conflict and terrorism,

Convinced that the world's parliaments and parliamentarians can make a major contribution through national as well as international cooperation to the promotion of the objective of reporting information to the public, especially on armed conflict and the struggle against terrorism,

Encouraging parliaments to promote the broadcasting of parliamentary debates and discussions,

Recalling the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted at the 161st session of the Inter-Parliamentary Council held in Cairo in 1997, which stressed, "The state of democracy presupposes freedom of opinion and expression; this right implies freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers",

Drawing attention to the fact that parliaments are accountable to the people and need to convey positions on terrorism or armed conflict based on their assessments, and that they play a major role in determining the parameters within which a free press and the media should operate in their coverage of information relating to terrorism and armed conflict,

Recognizing that the media plays an especially important role at both the international and the national levels, and that this role must be adequately considered by policy-makers and parliaments,

Reiterating that freedom of the press is one of the pillars of democracy, and that the media must not forget its role in society and in democratic life, providing impartial, accurate and verifiable information to citizens, thereby helping parliamentarians and the public to make well-informed decisions,

Underscoring, however, that freedom of expression is not an absolute right that can justify inciting hatred, racism, xenophobia and the violation of human rights,

Underlining the importance of respect for the rights of dissidents,

Recognizing that in addition to its legal rights and obligations, the media has an ethical responsibility to citizens and society, at a time when information and communication play an important role in the development of society and democratic life,

Reaffirming that the media can be a recognized forum for non-violent dialogue and an effective channel of communication,

Convinced that parliaments and the media can help to facilitate understanding and cooperation among peoples and in promoting dialogue, tolerance and understanding among civilizations, thus contributing to the prevention and countering of armed conflicts and terrorism,

Acknowledging the need for informed public debate on the issues of armed conflict and terrorism, in order to build consensus on the multifaceted and long-term strategies necessary to address them,

Aware of the unprecedented use of the media, particularly the Internet, made by terrorists in order to obtain the strongest possible impact and maximum attention around the world,

Expressing deep concern at the attacks perpetrated against journalists who cover situations of armed conflict and terrorism, and also at the wrongful detention of many such journalists, and stressing that these actions violate freedom of expression and freedom of information,

Strongly deploring the killing of many journalists and the imprisonment of many more in various armed conflicts and terrorist activities all over the world,

Recognizing the courage shown by journalists, both male and female, in high-risk situations,

Role of parliaments in providing impartial, accurate and verifiable information

1. *Urges* parliaments to explore ways and means to enhance impartial, accurate and verifiable coverage of armed conflict and terrorism by the media, while limiting the gains

uninhibited coverage may provide to terrorists, by carefully ensuring that terrorists' declared causes are not extolled, glorified or idealized directly or indirectly;

2. *Urges* parliaments that have not already done so to provide their legislation with strong provisions to prevent and combat terrorism, in particular in its transnational financial ramifications, and to combat money-laundering, drug trafficking, illegal trade in arms and organized crime that often provide resources for it, with particular attention paid to international cooperation through judicial assistance and the exchange of information between countries, organizations and authorities responsible for similar activities;
3. *Strongly urges* all Member Parliaments of the IPU to assume, before their States and citizens, in conformity with their national legislation and the international obligations of States, responsibility for overseeing the implementation and enforcement of national laws and international agreements that have been concluded to combat and prevent armed conflict and terrorism;
4. *Further urges* parliaments to make use of committees and other mechanisms to monitor closely whether government bodies act properly in protecting citizens during armed conflicts and situations involving terrorism;
5. *Calls upon* parliaments to take, in consultation with the media fraternity, the appropriate legislative measures so that media programmes and advertising content do not incite hatred, racism, xenophobia and the violation of human rights, nor violate standards of law and order;
6. *Also calls upon* parliaments to ensure that governments fulfil their responsibility to disseminate impartial, accurate and verifiable information about incidents involving terrorism and armed conflicts;
7. *Emphasizes* the need to make human rights a "living reality", thereby enlightening public opinion and helping people to take cognizance of their rights, especially in situations involving terrorism and armed conflict;

Role of the media in providing impartial, accurate and verifiable information

8. *Urges* the media to provide an impartial, accurate and verifiable picture of the events in situations of armed conflict and terrorism;
9. *Recommends* that the media consider adopting a voluntary code of conduct or appropriate guidelines for reporting on armed conflict and terrorism;
10. *Emphasizes* that freedom of information must be exercised with the strictest possible respect for the human dignity of the victims of armed conflict and terrorism;
11. *Condemns* the broadcasting of extremely violent images, where human mistreatment or deaths are shown on the Internet or in the media;
12. *Urges* the media to carefully verify its sources when confronted with unconfirmed information relating to armed conflicts and the struggle against terrorism;

13. *Also urges* the media to refuse to highlight the statements of terrorists and terrorist organizations that are aimed at gaining broader publicity and inciting people;
14. *Further recommends* that the media should play a role in peace-building activities, by making use of anything that may foster such activities, advocating reconciliation and upholding the values of tolerance and non-violence and the call for human communities to live together, for example by developing innovative programmes that allow peoples affected by armed conflict or terrorism to express themselves, and which can create a space for dialogue by highlighting mutual respect, collaboration and reconciliation;
15. *Emphasizes* that in order for society to address the issues that create an environment conducive to terrorism, the media should play a role in facilitating the open debates and discussions that are fundamental elements of democracy;
16. *Stresses* the need to promote educational programmes, targeting in particular young people and aimed at enabling a critical and informed reception of media content on armed conflicts and terrorist acts;
17. *Invites* governments, parliaments and the media to help young people to protect themselves from being drawn into terrorist activities;
18. *Urges* the media as well as parliaments to inform the public that when a State proclaims a state of emergency, such action must comply with the principles of the rule of law, and must thus respect international law and humanitarian rights;

Inter-parliamentary cooperation to combat armed conflict and terrorism

19. *Calls upon* parliamentarians the world over, in conformity with United Nations Security Council resolutions on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, to play their part in promoting international cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts;
20. *Emphasizes* the need for regular debates in parliaments on armed conflict and international terrorism, and the need for appropriate media coverage of these debates;
21. *Expresses* the need for a more intensive inter-parliamentary exchange of information and experience in respect of the implementation of effective legislative measures in this field, and stresses the supportive role played by the IPU to enhance media objectivity on issues relating to armed conflict and terrorism;
22. *Reaffirms* that parliament is the institution par excellence that embodies the diverse attributes and opinions of society and reflects and channels this diversity in the political process, and that one of its objectives is to defuse tensions and maintain a balance between the rival aspirations of diversity and uniformity, and of the individual and the collective, with the aim of strengthening social cohesion and solidarity;
23. *Reiterates* the call on parliaments made at the 109th IPU Assembly held in Geneva in 2003 to do everything possible “at the national level to facilitate the establishment of standing mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, as a way to promote action geared to achieving real peace”;

24. *Calls upon* parliaments to support governmental and inter-governmental structures, mechanisms, instruments and processes that promote stability, reconciliation and peaceful development at the national, regional and subregional levels, and to enhance their parliamentary dimension.