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INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Resolution adopted by consensus by the 116th IPU Assembly*

(Nusa Dua, Bali, 4 May 2007)

**ENSURING RESPECT FOR AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN ALL
RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND BELIEFS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD**

The 116th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Affirming that tolerance, recognition and acceptance of cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, and dialogue among and within civilizations are essential for respect, peaceful co-existence and cooperation among individuals and people in their diversity of belief, culture and language, and that differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but rather cherished as a precious asset of humanity,

Underlining the importance of promoting understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and friendship among human beings in their diversity of religion, belief, culture and language, and

* The Arab Group expressed a reservation on operative paragraph 5.

recalling the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable human rights and fundamental freedoms of all members of the human family, universal respect for which all States have an obligation to observe, protect and encourage,

Recognizing that all religions have made valuable contributions to civilization and that there are common values shared by all humankind,

Recalling the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, and in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Further recalling the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as the principles contained therein,

Welcoming the entry into force, on 18 March 2007, of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions,

Recalling that the IPU, through the resolutions it adopted at the 102nd (Berlin, 1999) and 103rd (Amman, 2000) Inter-Parliamentary Conferences and at the 110th IPU Assembly (Mexico City, 2004), has inter alia resolved to promote dialogue among civilizations and cultures, has emphasized the potential contribution of parliaments to the peaceful co-existence of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and to international reconciliation, and has called upon all States to adopt appropriate measures to ensure mutual respect and cooperation among ethnic, cultural and religious communities,

Recalling the adoption of the 2005 United Nations World Summit Outcome, which acknowledges the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world,

Welcoming all national, regional and international initiatives which seek to establish or enrich reciprocal knowledge, interfaith dialogue and mutual respect,

Commending the valuable contribution made by initiatives such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the Bali Declaration on Building Interfaith Harmony within the International Community, the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures, the Strategy of Enlightened Moderation, the Informal Meeting of Leaders on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and the Islam-Christianity Dialogue, which are all mutually inclusive, reinforcing and interrelated,

Recognizing that religions often play a central role in society in terms of their contribution to shaping social and family organizations and internalizing fundamental values that can and must help build a more tolerant and respectful society,

Recognizing that interfaith dialogue and understanding, including the awareness of differences and commonalities among peoples and civilizations, contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes, reduce the potential for animosity, clashes or violence and enable people to perceive ethnic, cultural or religious diversity as a source of cultural enrichment,

Emphasizing that interfaith dialogue should focus on what religions have in common instead of what divides them, and serve to strengthen relations between cultures and civilizations and resolve practical problems, while at the same time avoiding the entrenchment, or even creation, of artificial ethnic, cultural or religious identities or fault lines within and between societies,

Stressing that the focus on dialogue between civilizations and cultures must not be invoked to justify discriminatory laws and practices within cultures and civilizations, especially regarding women, children and the elderly, and that respect and tolerance for other cultures and

civilizations must always be rooted in the overarching principle of respect for the human rights protecting every human being, regardless of sex, race, religion or political affiliation,

Emphasizing, therefore, the need, at all levels of society and among nations, to strengthen freedom, justice, respect for human rights, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, respect for diversity of culture and religion or belief, dialogue and understanding, which are important elements for preserving and consolidating peace and security at the national, regional and international levels,

Alarmed by the reappearance of religious extremism and xenophobic expressions worldwide and *noting* that interfaith dialogue and religious freedom are effective means of fighting the scourge of intolerance,

Seriously concerned at all attacks upon religious places, sites and shrines, including any deliberate destruction of relics and monuments,

Alarmed that instances of intolerance and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, including acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by religious intolerance, are on the increase in many parts of the world and threaten the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and *recalling* that the use of violence in the name of religion can never be justified,

Alarmed by attempts to attribute acts of terrorism to any religion,

Condemning any display of xenophobia, racism and intolerance towards immigrants and ethnic, cultural and religious minorities, and *emphasizing* that combating hatred, prejudice, intolerance and stereotyping on the basis of religion or culture represents a significant global challenge that requires further action,

Recalling that parliament is the institution that embodies par excellence the diverse attributes and opinions of society and reflects and channels this diversity in the political process, and that its mission is to defuse tensions with the aim of strengthening social cohesion and solidarity,

Underscoring the particular obligation of parliaments and their members to defend and promote the rights of persons belonging to ethnic, cultural and religious minorities, thereby creating a society in which every individual enjoys all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, in particular freedom of worship and the right to freely practice a religion, under democratic principles and conditions,

Convinced that parliaments can help facilitate understanding and cooperation among States and peoples and promote dialogue, tolerance, mutual respect and understanding among civilizations, thus helping to prevent and counter armed conflicts and terrorism,

Recalling that, according to its Statutes, one of the purposes of the IPU is to work towards peace and cooperation among peoples, and *recognizing* the significant role that the IPU can play in enhancing interaction between societies and peoples and promoting dialogue among different civilizations,

Further underscoring the growing role played by the press, in particular the global media (satellite television channels and the Internet) in shaping the image that the members of different civilizations and religious communities have of each other,

Reiterating that freedom of expression and freedom of the press are, as undeniable fundamental rights, two pillars of democracy, two long-awaited freedoms for which societies and individuals have long fought against tyranny and oppression,

Reaffirming that freedom of expression should be exercised in such a way as not to incite hatred, racism, xenophobia or human rights violations,

Stressing the crucial role of education in promoting a better understanding of other cultures and civilizations, a spirit of tolerance and the principle of non-discrimination towards all persons,

A. Role of parliaments in ensuring respect for and peaceful co-existence between all religious communities and beliefs on the national level

1. *Calls on* parliaments and their members to use all means available to them to promote peaceful co-existence and constructive cooperation between different communities and to prevent any unfavourable or discriminatory treatment arising from their belonging to an ethnic, cultural or religious group, in a spirit of tolerance and dialogue;
2. *Acknowledges* that mutual respect and cooperation among ethnic, cultural and religious communities are expressed, for the most part, not in special laws but, more effectively, in the framework of a constitution guaranteeing democracy, respect for human rights, individual freedoms, including religious freedom, and the peaceful co-existence of ethnic and religious groups and minorities;
3. *Calls on* parliaments therefore to take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic,

political, social and cultural life, to make all efforts to enact legislation prohibiting such discrimination and to repeal any existing discriminatory laws, and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or belief;

4. *Urges* all parliaments to take effective measures to combat incitement to, or acts of, violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by hatred and intolerance based on culture, religion or belief, which may cause discord and disharmony within and among religious and cultural communities, in compliance with relevant international obligations;
5. *Reaffirms* that whether or not people profess a religion is a matter of personal choice and therefore *calls on* parliaments to ensure that such a choice is not penalized and, in particular, is not punishable by law;
6. *Calls on* all parliaments and their members to take appropriate measures so that the national political and legal systems reflect the multicultural diversity of society;
7. *Stresses* that democratic political institutions are a goal, and that hence organizations of all kinds should extend and promote the use of more participatory practices and avoid the marginalization and exclusion of, and discrimination against, specific sectors of society;
8. *Encourages* parliaments to ensure, as appropriate, that, in the course of their official duties, members of law enforcement bodies and the military, civil servants, educators and other public officials respect different religions and beliefs and do not discriminate against persons professing other religions or beliefs, and that the necessary and appropriate education or training is provided;

9. *Urges* parliaments to ensure that international and regional agreements to preserve the identity of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities are ratified or signed by any States which have not yet done so, and to supervise their effective implementation;
10. *Urges* parliaments to adopt political measures and enact legislation aimed at building the capacity to accept diversity among members of different social communities;
11. *Calls on* parliaments to ensure that religious and cultural sites are fully respected and protected in compliance with international obligations and in accordance with their national legislation, and to adopt adequate measures aimed at preventing acts or threats of damage to and destruction of these sites;
12. *Invites* parliaments to take effective measures to protect freedom of the press and freedom of expression, and *calls on* parliaments to enact legislation which promotes the ethical responsibility that goes with these freedoms, particularly not to incite hatred, racism, xenophobia and human rights violations;
13. *Calls on* parliaments, as appropriate, to promote policies designed to nurture understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and friendship among human beings in their diversity of religion, belief, culture and language, and to mainstream the gender perspective in these policies, in recognition that education at all levels is one of the principal means of building a culture of peace;

B. Role of parliaments in ensuring respect for and peaceful co-existence between all religious communities and beliefs in a globalized world

14. *Recognizes* that respect for religious and cultural diversity and dialogue between different religions and cultures in an increasingly globalized world promotes enhanced

understanding among religions, cultures and civilizations and contributes to international cooperation, peace and security;

15. *Acknowledges* that respect for the diversity of religions and cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation in a climate of mutual trust and understanding can serve to combat ideologies and practices based on discrimination, intolerance and hatred and help to reinforce world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples;
16. *Also recognizes* that, despite the intolerance and conflicts that are dividing countries and regions and constitute a growing threat to peace, all religions, cultures and civilizations share a common set of universal values and can all contribute to the enrichment of humankind;
17. *Welcomes*, therefore, the efforts of States, relevant bodies within the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, civil society, including faith-based and other non-governmental organizations, and the media to develop a culture of peace and promote understanding and tolerance among human beings in their diversity of culture, religion, belief and language, and *encourages* them to continue such efforts, including by promoting interfaith and intercultural interaction within and among societies through, inter alia, congresses, conferences, seminars, workshops, research work and related processes;
18. *Calls on* parliaments to take all necessary action to combat incitement to or acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by hatred and intolerance based on culture, religion or belief, which may cause discord and disharmony within and among societies globally, in compliance with relevant international obligations;

19. *Invites* national parliaments and parliamentarians to take an active part in the programmes of the United Nations and UNESCO for dialogue among civilizations and cultures and to encourage their governments to contribute to such programmes, in particular to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the High-Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations;
20. *Invites* parliaments to enact legislation to counter the dissemination, in the media and via the Internet, of hate messages based on culture, religion or belief;

C. Role of inter-parliamentary cooperation in ensuring respect for and peaceful co-existence between all religious communities and beliefs in a globalized world

21. *Expresses* the need for a more intensive inter-parliamentary exchange of information and experience in respect of the implementation of effective measures in this field, and *stresses* the supportive role played by the IPU;
22. *Urges* parliaments and parliamentarians to establish and strengthen parliamentary dialogue among civilizations and cultures, within the framework of the IPU and the various inter-parliamentary assemblies they participate in, and through bilateral initiatives such as the establishment of inter-parliamentary friendship groups;
23. *Recommends* that the IPU Secretariat and national parliaments, in coordination with the United Nations Secretariat, UNESCO and other relevant organizations, contribute to the preparation of an international instrument for the implementation of all the provisions of this resolution, as adopted by the 116th IPU Assembly.