



Third Standing Committee
Democracy and Human Rights

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**THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND ITS INTERPLAY WITH PARLIAMENTS
AND OTHER DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED ASSEMBLIES FOR THE MATURING
AND DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY**

Preliminary draft resolution prepared by the co-Rapporteurs
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The 113th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

- (1) *Recognizing* that a sincere and active commitment to the interplay between civil society and parliaments and other democratically elected assemblies is a long-term political investment that, if properly managed, will contribute to ensuring peace, justice and prosperity,
- (2) *Acknowledging* that there will always be an essential difference between positive and constructive interplay and relations that are or become confrontational, manipulative or inspired by hidden motives,
- (3) *Noting* that the articulation of this interplay must take into account both national and international dimensions, and with this the need to commit States not only to observe but also to promote ongoing collaboration with civil society, with the aim of developing and maturing democracy, and *recognizing* that the dynamic links between the maturing of democracy as a political process and its participatory nature can be strengthened by such interplay,
- (4) *Convinced* that human and social capital are the driving forces and key elements in the democratization process, and are as important as financial and physical capital,
- (5) *Acknowledging* that parliaments around the world have a responsibility to provide a foundation for people-oriented social and economic policies which enhance bonds of trust, mutual confidence and reciprocity among citizens,
- (6) *Convinced* that an enabling environment for civil society, through legal provisions that guarantee the basic freedoms of assembly, association and expression in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international and regional covenants and conventions, should be the cornerstone and basis of interplay between parliaments and civil society,

(7) *Underlining* the grass-roots-based, non-profit and voluntary (non-compulsory) aspect of civil society organizations and their other characteristics (including their pursuit of social or cultural aims with the desire for public benefit, and the fact that they are organized with independence from the apparatus of government), and *noting* the great differences in the structure of civil society in the various regions,

(8) *Stressing* the fact that civil society is currently developing into a major global, social and economic force, and that its activities cover a very wide field, including social services, education, health, human rights and culture,

(9) *Recognizing* the importance of creative interplay between parliaments and civil society, especially in bridging gaps between various local groups and government bodies, public sector organizations, private business enterprises and the public,

(10) *Conscious* of forces that can undermine democracy by suppressing or manipulating civil society, that may emanate from repressive and authoritarian regimes or from intolerant ideologies from below, including religious intolerance and fundamentalism, terrorism and other anti-democratic ideologies, old and new forms of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, fascism and extreme revolutionary engagement built on hate and violence,

1. *Pledges* to ensure that the articulation of the interplay between civil society and parliaments and other democratically elected assemblies will not only contribute to the eradication of poverty, but also empower even the poorest of the poor to engage in general democratic life in their respective countries;
2. *Calls on* all parliaments and governments to strive to promote constructive interplay with their respective civil societies, with a view to optimizing the participatory character of their democracies;
3. *Calls on* the world's parliamentarians to initiate and implement projects to facilitate public participation and the ensuing education of citizens in democracy that such participation will engender, thereby training civil society in the operations and functions of legislatures;
4. *Further calls* on parliaments all over the world to put forward flexible social policies and legislation to promote civil society and make it easier for voluntary organizations to register or to be incorporated, while at the same time guaranteeing the independence and diversity of non-governmental organizations;
5. *Emphasizes* that fair funding of civil society is necessary in maturing democracies, and that this need gives both the public and private sectors a great opportunity to contribute to a positive development by collaborating with civil society;
6. *Urges* all States to protect not only old, well-established organizations, but also new democratic movements and associations in the most marginalized neighbourhoods and villages, and to support the struggle for tolerance and coexistence in those environments;

7. *Strongly urges* parliaments to support and where necessary enhance all channels of political expression, the promotion of human rights and investment in human capital, through legislation, policies and regulations that promote civil society;
8. *Reiterates* that transparency and accountability are vital to civil society and that the establishment of mechanisms for control and self-control, and also of national and international codes of conduct, can engender great improvements in this regard;
9. *Urges* parliaments to invite representatives of the corporate sector and NGOs to engage in a policy dialogue aimed at exploring avenues of increased collaboration, especially with regard to long-term commitments in areas such as the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, protection of the environment and debtrelief, and also aimed at identifying impediments preventing NGOs from participating in and contributing to various fields of development;
10. *Invites* parliaments and governments to support the role played by civil society organizations in jobcreation and economic development;
11. *Urges* parliaments and governments to encourage the development and strengthening of local civil society by providing the necessary support, training and technical assistance, and by organizing open hearings and other activities that promote a permanent dialogue with civil society;
12. *Invites* parliaments to participate in the creation of ongoing contacts with NGOs, with a view to encouraging a greater level of popular advocacy in political life;
13. *Recommends* that the IPU project itself as a global actor in the promotion of civil society, by adopting a new comprehensive media strategy to make the Union better known to the general public.