



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
122nd Assembly and related meetings
Bangkok (Thailand), 27th March - 1st April 2010



Assembly
Item 2

A/122/2-P.7
28 March 2010

**CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE REQUESTS FOR THE
INCLUSION OF AN EMERGENCY ITEM IN THE ASSEMBLY AGENDA**

**Request for the inclusion of an emergency item
in the agenda of the 122nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
submitted by the delegations of Cuba, France, Thailand, Uganda,
United Kingdom and Uruguay**

On 28 March 2010, the Secretary General received from the delegations of Cuba, France, Thailand, Uganda, United Kingdom and Uruguay a request for the inclusion in the agenda of the 122nd Assembly of an emergency item entitled:

"The role of parliaments in strengthening the solidarity of the international community towards the people of Haiti and Chile in the wake of devastating major disasters, and urgent actions required in all disaster-prone countries to improve disaster-risk assessment, prevention and mitigation".

Delegates to the 122nd Assembly will find attached the text of the communication submitting the request (Annex I), an explanatory memorandum (Annex II), as well as a draft resolution (Annex III) in support thereof.

The 122nd Assembly will be required to take a decision on the request of the delegations of Cuba, France, Thailand, Uganda, United Kingdom and Uruguay, on Sunday, 28 March 2010.

Under the terms of Assembly Rule 11.1, any Member of the Union may request the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda. Such a request must be accompanied by a brief explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution which clearly define the scope of the subject covered by the request. The Secretariat shall communicate the request and any such documents immediately to all Members.

Furthermore, Assembly Rule 11.2 stipulates that:

- (a) A request for the inclusion of an emergency item must relate to a major event of international concern on which it appears necessary for the IPU to express its opinion. Such a request must receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in order to be accepted;
- (b) The Assembly may place only one emergency item on its agenda. Should several requests obtain the requisite majority, the one having received the largest number of positive votes shall be accepted;
- (c) The authors of two or more requests for the inclusion of an emergency item may combine their proposals to present a joint one, provided that each of the original proposals relates to the same subject;
- (d) The subject of a proposal that has been withdrawn by its authors or rejected by the Assembly cannot be included in the draft resolution submitted on the emergency item, unless it is clearly referred to in the request and title of the subject adopted by the Assembly.

**COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL BY THE
DELEGATIONS OF CUBA, FRANCE, THAILAND, UGANDA,
UNITED KINGDOM AND URUGUAY**

28 March 2010

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

The delegations of Cuba, France, Thailand, Uganda, United Kingdom and Uruguay have agreed to make a joint proposal for the emergency item as follows:

"The role of parliaments in strengthening the solidarity of the international community towards the people of Haiti and Chile in the wake of devastating major disasters, and urgent actions required in all disaster-prone countries to improve disaster-risk assessment, prevention and mitigation".

Please accept, Mr. Secretary General, the assurances of our highest consideration.

(signed) Ramón PEZ FERRO
Head of the Cuban delegation

(signed) Patrice MARTIN-LALANDE
Head of the French delegation

(signed) Prasobsook BOONDECH
Head of the Thailand delegation

(signed) Rebecca KADAGA (Ms.)
Head of the Ugandan delegation

(signed) John AUSTIN
Head of the British delegation

(signed) Monica XAVIER (Mrs.)
for the Uruguayan delegation

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN STRENGTHENING THE SOLIDARITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TOWARDS THE PEOPLE OF HAITI AND CHILE IN THE WAKE OF DEVASTATING MAJOR DISASTERS, AND URGENT ACTIONS REQUIRED IN ALL DISASTER-PRONE COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE DISASTER-RISK ASSESSMENT, PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

Explanatory memorandum submitted by the delegations of Cuba, France, Thailand, Uganda, United Kingdom and Uruguay

The world witnessed through images shown on the news the devastating earthquake that hit Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital. Similarly, a few weeks later, another powerful earthquake just off the coast of Chile also caused considerable damage.

The situation in both countries was disconsolate. There is no human right that has not been affected by both disasters, starting with the most fundamental of all - the right to life. In addition to the more than 100,000 deaths in Haiti, the number of dead and injured in Chile runs into the hundreds, with several internally displaced persons and those who have lost their homes. The number of jobless persons in Haiti is incalculable, while the right to education remains a challenge and the right to adequate food almost a dream; and this in spite of the goodwill of the Haitian and Chilean Governments and the cooperation of the international community.

In the case of Haiti, the tragedy has also unearthed a worrying surge in child trafficking, which has prompted UNICEF to take preventive measures, and which should also be the focus of parliaments and parliamentarians, as well as of all international organizations.

There can be no hesitation or indifference in the face of such a difficult humanitarian situation in both countries and that is why we have been so pleased to see such mobilization in all corners of the world to send aid to Haiti and Chile. The right of nations to international solidarity is fully vindicated in this specific case.

Yet the goodwill of nations to assist both countries is not sufficient. As never before have the confirmation and consolidation of multilateralism become imperative. It falls to us to support the United Nations and its central role in coordinating efforts so that the necessary aid reaches all affected persons and deals with the priorities identified by the Haitian and Chilean authorities.

It should be noted that before the earthquake, Haiti was already the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Its worsened situation poses a challenge to the international community, and in particular to the rich and industrialized countries of the North. The response to the current emergency must go hand in hand with a comprehensive and sustainable plan for the economic and social reconstruction of the country, which will enable its noble people to enjoy their right to development and meet their basic needs on their own.

For all these reasons we consider it necessary to include an emergency item in the agenda of the 122nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to be held in Thailand from 27 March to 1 April 2010. The purpose of this would be to undertake an in-depth analysis of the serious problems that have emerged in both countries and recommend measures with a view to improving the situation in both countries.

Disasters threaten people's lives and food security and derail their socio-economic development. The human tragedy and economic losses caused by disasters in Haiti, Chile, China (drought and heavy snowfall) and France (storms and floods) in the first three months of 2010 are further evidence of this.

According to the information available, in 2008 alone 321 recorded disasters killed 235,816 people and affected another 211 million. The direct economic cost was estimated at US\$ 181 billion. This is more than twice the annual average economic losses (US\$ 81 billion) caused by disasters during the period 2000 to 2007.

The poor are always among those hardest hit, for obvious reasons: they live in marginalized areas that are prone to disasters and have too few human and financial resources to overcome their vulnerability to the natural hazards they face every day. Disasters undermine national, regional and international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Disasters impoverish people, in some cases sinking them into abject poverty; as a result, many poor families are forced to keep their children out of school. Disasters damage or destroy schools and hospitals. They tend to reinforce gender inequality in that they add to the burden of coping and increase the risk of domestic violence and sexual harassment. Examples of the long-term impact of disasters on socio-economic development are easily found in every country, especially in developing and least developed countries.

Disasters are the outcome of risk-insensitive socio-economic development in disaster-prone areas. Disasters are not natural. People's vulnerabilities in the event of a disaster are deeply rooted in the socio-economic development process. The impact of recent disasters has underlined the urgent need for governments to adopt measures to make disaster-risk reduction a means of sustaining gains in poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs.

In the short term, the Governments of Chile and Haiti and the international community should take steps to ensure that reconstructed houses, schools and hospitals are able to withstand future earthquakes. In the long term, policies and guidelines should be put in place to ensure that socio-economic development protects people from disasters rather than augments the risks.

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN STRENGTHENING THE SOLIDARITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TOWARDS THE PEOPLE OF HAITI AND CHILE IN THE WAKE OF DEVASTATING MAJOR DISASTERS, AND URGENT ACTIONS REQUIRED IN ALL DISASTER-PRONE COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE DISASTER-RISK ASSESSMENT, PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

Draft resolution submitted by the delegations of CUBA, FRANCE, THAILAND, UGANDA, UNITED KINGDOM and URUGUAY

The 122nd Inter-Parliamentary Assembly,

- (1) *Considering* that the world learned with surprise that a devastating earthquake had hit Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, and that another had occurred off the coast of Chile, causing considerable damage to both countries,
- (2) *Appalled* by the hecatomb that wiped out the Haitian capital's entire infrastructure, causing over 100,000 deaths and leaving tens of thousands injured, as well as the destruction of houses and other public buildings and a health and education system and other essential services rendered dysfunctional, and that the actual earthquake that hit Chile or the ensuing tsunami destroyed houses, disrupted utilities and also resulted in deaths and injuries,
- (3) *Alarmed* by the difficult food situation faced by the Haitian people and aware of the need to implement food security strategies that can guarantee immediate and sustainable supplies of food,
- (4) *Considering* that what occurred in Haiti is unprecedented in modern history, because although there have been disasters in different parts of the world which have resulted in a higher number of victims, none has quite so completely shattered the public, economic and cultural infrastructure as this one, stripping the country of all means to function and reconstruct itself,
- (5) *Mindful* of the different ways these disasters can affect each country depending on their vulnerabilities, but *convinced* that humanitarian action must reach all those who have been affected,
- (6) *Considering* that huge numbers of lives were lost in the earthquake in Haiti, which caused damage and losses amounting to an estimated US\$ 7.8 billion (US\$ 4.3 billion in physical damage and US\$ 3.5 billion in economic losses), or the equivalent of more than 120 per cent of Haiti's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009,
- (7) *Also considering* that the earthquake in Chile caused damage and losses estimated at between US\$ 15 and 30 billion, or the equivalent of 15 per cent of Chile's GDP,
- (8) *Acknowledging* that the growing frequency, intensity and impact of disasters pose a significant threat to people's lives and livelihoods, and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),

(9) *Recalling* that the resolution on natural disasters adopted unanimously by the 112th IPU Assembly (Manila, 2005) proposed that nations further strengthen their cooperation in disaster-prevention efforts,

(10) *Aware* that nearly 60 per cent of the people killed by disasters in the past ten years died in earthquakes, the recent major earthquakes in Haiti and Chile having underscored that earthquakes have become the deadliest natural hazard during that period and remain a serious threat for millions of people worldwide, with eight of the planet's ten most populous cities being constructed on earthquake fault lines according to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction,

(11) *Recognizing* that about two thirds of disasters are caused by climate-related hazards and that climate change will likely not only increase the frequency of such hazards, but also the vulnerability of poor nations and communities worldwide,

(12) *Considering* that the poor account for the majority of all people killed in disasters, that according to the United Nations Development Programme, 11 per cent of people exposed to natural hazards live in low human development countries, which account for more than 52 per cent of total recorded disaster-related deaths; for high human development countries, the figures are 15 and only 1.8 per cent respectively,

(13) *Also recognizing* that disasters are not natural; rather it is the combination of hazards such as floods and tropical storms with an exposed, vulnerable and ill-prepared population or community that causes disasters to occur,

(14) *Noting* that climate change will contribute to heightened risks for populations dependent on subsistence agriculture, exacerbate food and water shortages and increase the incidence of malnutrition and waterborne and foodborne diseases, and may lead to population displacements ,

(15) *Acknowledging* that there is growing evidence that both disasters and climate change hit poor nations and communities the hardest and that disaster-risk reduction for immediate climate change adaptation is a strategic step towards sustainable development,

(16) *Stressing* that the international community and governments urgently need to establish frameworks and measures to help poor countries and communities adapt to climate change while continuing to engage in debate and negotiation on climate change mitigation,

(17) *Considering* that disaster-risk reduction refers to a set of policies, strategies and measures to reduce risk and vulnerability to hazards that can be easily applied to reducing the vulnerability of nations and communities to climate-related disasters,

(18) *Recognizing* that the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which was endorsed by 168 governments at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005, lays the groundwork for the implementation of disaster-risk reduction and specifically identifies

the need to promote the integration of risk reduction into existing climate variability and future climate change strategies,

(19) *Underscoring* that climate change adaptation and disaster-risk reduction are closely linked, as they both aim to reduce people's vulnerabilities, bolster the capacity of nations and communities to withstand disaster, and protect people's lives, livelihoods and socio-economic development gains from disasters,

(20) *Stressing* that both climate change adaptation and disaster-risk reduction are cross-cutting development issues that need to be urgently addressed in the process of sustainable development through multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary cooperation and collaboration, especially at the local and national levels,

(21) *Considering* that close cooperation between the climate change and the disaster-risk reduction communities at the national level will strengthen existing human and financial resources and allow them to build the capacity of nations and communities to withstand climate-related disasters and to achieve sustainable development,

1. *Supports* the efforts made by the national authorities to deal with the disasters that occurred on their respective territories, as well as the action of various organizations and governments which, in different parts of the world, have mobilized to send humanitarian aid;
2. *Calls upon* all parliaments and governments to take the necessary measures to mobilize human and material resources to support the reconstruction of these countries;
3. *Urges* creditor countries to cancel Haiti's external debt given its grave economic situation, which has been exacerbated by the consequences of the earthquake;
4. *Reaffirms* the need for the earthquake assistance and contributions currently being received by the Haitian Government to be converted into permanent and systematic contributions with a view to reconstructing the country and establishing a self-sufficient State that is able to provide its people with better living conditions;
5. *Confirms* that in the face of such a difficult humanitarian situation, there can be no hesitation or indifference, that the right of nations to international solidarity is fully vindicated in this specific case, and *reiterates* the urgent need for the international community to mobilize and come to the aid of these Latin American nations to alleviate their suffering;
6. *Welcomes* the outpouring of solidarity towards the people of Haiti and Chile in the wake of devastating major disaster, and *requests* governments to join or add to it and to promote the continued mobilization of people for the benefit of those countries, taking account of the needs expressed by the Chilean and Haitian authorities and, in the case of Haiti, of the added complication of the almost total destruction of the country's infrastructure;
7. *Calls upon* governments to take serious and urgent measures to make disaster-risk assessment a precondition for post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction planning and for programmes to protect people from future earthquakes;

8. *Also calls upon* governments to take immediate action to assess all adaptations to climate change and to protect the most vulnerable groups from the impact of climate-related disasters by applying comprehensive disaster-risk reduction tools;
9. *Urges* governments to review strategies and programmes related to disaster management so as to ensure that the reduction of vulnerabilities to disaster risks is central to development planning and programmes;
10. *Also urges* governments to assess all critical public facilities such as schools and hospitals with a view to making them resilient to earthquakes, floods and storms, and to make disaster-risk reduction a part of poverty reduction and of all planning and programmes aimed at achieving the MDGs;
11. *Calls upon* all parliaments to foster strong political will and commitment and to allocate budget funds for disaster-risk reduction at the national and local levels, it being essential to safeguard the sustainability of poverty reduction and socio-economic development;
12. *Also calls upon* governments to strengthen interministerial cooperation and collaboration by establishing an interministerial taskforce made up of ministries playing a key role in socio-economic development, such as the ministries of finance, planning, infrastructure, construction, water, land-use planning, education, health, water, the environment, agriculture, climate change and disaster management, in order to make disaster-risk assessment an integral part of socio-economic development planning and processes;
13. *Urges* governments to take concrete action to enhance people's understanding of and capacity to address the impact of climate change and disaster-risk reduction through public awareness, education and training;
14. *Also urges* all parliaments to develop a national legal framework to ensure a synergy between disaster-risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and between disaster-risk reduction and poverty reduction/socio-economic development, so as to protect the best interests of those vulnerable to geological and climate-related disasters;
15. *Calls upon* all IPU Member Parliaments to vote for "Disaster-risk reduction: An instrument for achieving the MDGs and sustainable development" as one of the items to be discussed in depth at the 123rd IPU Assembly (Geneva, 2010) or 124th IPU Assembly (Panama, 2011).