

Assembly
Item 2

A/127/2-P.2
8 October 2012

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 127th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union submitted by the delegation of the United Arab Emirates

On 21 September 2012, the Secretary General received from the delegation of the United Arab Emirates a request for the inclusion in the agenda of the 127th Assembly of an emergency item entitled:

"The international role of parliamentarians in prohibiting the defamation of religions and the desecration of religious symbols and shrines by contributing to the conclusion of an international agreement on the criminalization of such acts and by recognizing respect for religions as a prerequisite for international peace, understanding and cooperation".

Delegates to the 127th Assembly will find attached the text of the communication submitting the request (Annex I), as well as an explanatory memorandum (Annex II) and a draft resolution in support thereof (Annex III).

The 127th Assembly will be required to take a decision on the request of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates on Monday, 22 October 2012.

Under the terms of Assembly Rule 11.1, any Member of the IPU 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- (d) The subject of a proposal that has been withdrawn by its authors or rejected by the Assembly cannot be included in the draft resolution submitted on the emergency item,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 SECRETARY
GENERAL OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DIVISION OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

21 September 2012

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

The United Arab Emirates Parliamentary Division wishes to propose the inclusion of an emergency item entitled:

"The international role of parliamentarians in prohibiting the defamation of religions and the desecration of religious symbols and shrines by contributing to the conclusion of an international agreement on the criminalization of such acts and by recognizing respect for religions as a prerequisite for international peace, understanding and cooperation".

in the agenda of the 127th IPU Assembly in accordance with Assembly Rule 11 and Article 14.2 of the Statutes.

Please take the necessary action.

The explanatory memorandum and draft resolution will follow shortly.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

Mr. Mohamed Salem AL-MAZROUI
General Secretary of the UAE
Parliamentary Division

THE INTERNATIONAL ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN PROHIBITING THE DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS AND THE DESECRATION OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS AND SHRINES BY CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONCLUSION OF AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT ON THE CRIMINALIZATION OF SUCH ACTS AND BY RECOGNIZING RESPECT FOR RELIGIONS AS A PREREQUISITE FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION

Explanatory memorandum submitted by the delegation of the United Arab Emirates

The Parliamentary Division of the United Arab Emirates Federal National Council wishes to propose an emergency item on "The international role of parliamentarians in prohibiting the defamation of religions and the desecration of religious symbols and shrines by contributing to the conclusion of an international agreement on the criminalization of such acts and by recognizing respect for religions as a prerequisite for international peace, understanding and cooperation" based on the following justifications:

1. The prevalence of the phenomenon of defamation of and disdain for religions and desecration of religious symbols and shrines consolidates differences, reinforces the clash of civilizations and fosters contempt of cultures and mutual misunderstanding between the peoples and civilizations of the world. This also hampers international relations, setting the stage for conflict and violence, which contrasts with the accelerating efforts today to achieve international convergence through a cultural framework of intellectual globalization, in which each culture maintains its beliefs and ideas and develops aspects of agreement and dialogue, rather than conflict and contrast, with people of other civilizations and cultures.
2. The drafting of an international convention that opposes defamation of religions is not inconsistent with respect for fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression and others enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other relevant international conventions. Indeed, the importance of such a convention is based on the need for an international framework that supports the fundamental elements for achieving international peace and security as the basic aim and objective of the United Nations and the other international organizations. Any threat to this peace, and the subsequent suspension of international cooperation and understanding, will bring into question the very *raison d'être* of these organizations. Specifically, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the global organization of parliaments, will face significant difficulties if segregation and a schism between the world's cultures and civilizations prevail as a result of the continued defamation of the religions and desecration of religious symbols and shrines.

3. International efforts have focused in the past two decades particularly on fighting terrorism, ideological extremism and unjustified acts of violence against innocent civilians, especially within the framework of existing international conventions and the array of UN and other international obligations and commitments. However, the prevalence of the phenomenon of religious defamation and desecration of religious symbols and shrines breeds and fuels terrorism, extremism and reciprocal violence between peoples of different cultures to the extent that it may affect the security and stability of the world and significantly undermine the efforts of the United Nations and the IPU, which devote their efforts to bringing different nations together in a common forum that reflects the different cultures and concepts of the world.

4 The United Arab Emirates Parliamentary Division believes that it is urgent to draw up such a convention in order to arrest incitement to hatred between peoples, particularly in view of the provisions of the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international conventions and commitments that prohibit any acts that incite hatred. In addition, the defamation of religions is an affront to the dignity and feelings of others, which was specifically prohibited by the UN Human Rights Council in a resolution adopted in 2011, notably acts that lead to the defamation of religions.

5. The existence of such a convention will help rein in the convenient use of double standards and fill loopholes in many national laws in developed countries that disregard people of other cultures and contain no provisions on the criminalization of acts of religious defamation. Since the IPU is founded on the principle of equality between all the parliaments of the world expressing the voice of the world's peoples, it is requested at this stage to contribute to the rebalancing of the principles of international justice through a declaration that rejects any form of discrimination or superiority of one ideology or culture over others, thus consolidating the foundations of international cooperation.

6. Such an emergency item is in keeping with the requirements of today's world and the technological developments it is witnessing, as well as the various revolutions in the areas of communication, information, media and science. Human progress cannot co-exist, evolve or continue while the peoples of the world are busy dealing with religious conflicts, which are unsympathetic to the dialogue of civilizations perspectives adopted by the United Nations, the importance of which is agreed by all cultures and civilizations of the world.

7. The UAE Parliamentary Division wishes to emphasize the importance of the role of parliaments on the international arena in combating this phenomenon, which is rejected and refused by the popular conscience represented by the world's parliaments. The effectiveness of the parliamentary role is best illustrated by bringing pressure to bear on governments through legislative mechanisms and oversight of government action in the area of preserving international security through cooperation with the United Nations, or by establishing an international code of conduct for the media and the social networking sites. This with a view to prohibiting the publication of materials that incite hatred against religions, which have devastating consequences and may generate uncontrollable acts of violence.

In view of these and other justifications, the UAE Parliamentary Division wishes to propose this emergency item owing to its relevance to the subject of international peace and security.

THE INTERNATIONAL ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN PROHIBITING THE DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS AND THE DESECRATION OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS AND SHRINES BY CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONCLUSION OF AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT ON THE CRIMINALIZATION OF SUCH ACTS AND BY RECOGNIZING RESPECT FOR RELIGIONS AS A PREREQUISITE FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION

Draft resolution submitted by the delegation of the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The 127th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

(1) *Referring* to the pledge made by the countries of the world by virtue of the Charter of the United Nations to promote and encourage respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination based on religion, language, sex or race,

(2) *Also referring* to Resolution 65/224 on Combating defamation of religions adopted by the 65th session of the UN General Assembly, which confirms that vilification of religions is a serious affront to human dignity and that violations of human rights could lead to social disharmony,

(3) *Considering* the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and UN General Assembly Resolution.36/55, Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, as well as the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Religious and Linguistic Minorities,

(4) *Welcoming* UN Human Rights Council Resolution 7/19, Combating defamation of religions in the context of physical attacks and assaults on places of worship of all religions and targeting of religious symbols,

(5) *Renewing* the IPU's commitment to its resolution on *Ensuring respect for and peaceful co-existence between all religious communities and beliefs in a globalized world*, which calls for acceptance of cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity as a means of promoting international peace, security and understanding,

1. Expresses its grave concern about the persistence of dangerous acts of defamation of religions and desecration of religious symbols, and attacks on followers of religions, which lead to rising discrimination, extremism and misunderstanding. This in turn results in divisions and hatred among cultures and peoples of the world, which could have serious consequences and jeopardize international peace and security, global cooperation and understanding;
2. *Strongly rejects* calls for incitement and all types of acts aimed at disrespecting religions or religious symbols or shrines, and *considers* that such acts, regardless of the means used, incite to hatred and to the violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms, thus leading to discrimination, violence, extremism and terrorism. This contradicts the international will expressed in the UN Millennium Declaration (September 2000) to take measures to eliminate acts of racism and xenophobia;

3. *Confirms* that profound respect for freedom of expression must be accompanied by international duties and responsibilities - according to the principles of international humanitarian law – which entails the need to ensure and respect the rights and freedoms of others, preserve global security and international peace and understanding and strengthen the international community's commitment to promoting a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations and cultures of the world and respect for various religions and cultures;
4. *Also confirms* that the right to freedom of expression, as guaranteed by national constitutions and legislation, does not prejudice General Recommendation No. 15: Organized violence based on ethnic origin (Art. 4) of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and that the prohibition of the dissemination of all ideas based on racial superiority or hatred is compatible with the right to freedom of opinion and expression;
5. *Calls for* an international convention to ensure the following:
 - Full respect for religions, and the prevention of religious defamation and the desecration of religious symbols and shrines,
 - The adoption by States of the necessary legal measures to criminalize abusive actions against religions, religious symbols and shrines,
 - The consideration that such acts motivate hatred, discrimination and mistrust between cultures and peoples of the world,
 - The convention shall ensure that States adopt all possible measures in accordance with their constitutional and legal systems aimed at promoting tolerance, mutual respect, rapprochement and harmony among the world's civilizations,
 - Such a convention should be an integral part of the international human rights legal framework;
6. *Also calls for* parliaments' effective contribution to the signature of such a convention through the necessary legislative, regulatory and political measures, and *calls on* parliaments to urge their governments to heed the IPU's call in this matter;
7. *Appeals for* the launch of an international parliamentary campaign under IPU auspices and the participation of regional parliamentary organizations in the fight against incitement to religious hatred and ensuing violence;
8. *Urges* national parliaments and regional parliamentary organizations to cooperate with the IPU to effectively contribute to the advancement of the dialogue of civilizations agenda, and *emphasizes* the importance of parliamentary participation in all related events;
9. *Calls on* parliaments to contribute to the development of the national education curriculum in order to create a culture of tolerance and acceptance of others and eliminate discrimination based on religion, and acts of hatred;

10. *Also calls on* the print media, as well as the audio-visual and electronic media, including the Internet, and any other media, to be aware of their responsibilities in promoting peace and global harmony by prohibiting the publication of any work or image inciting the defamation of religions or the desecration of religious symbols, or any related intolerance and discrimination against any religion in any way;
11. *Urges* parliaments to enact the necessary legislation and, in accordance with their national regulations, to prohibit the encouragement or incitement to religious hatred through implementation of the decisions of the World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, General Recommendation No. 15 of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and international human rights law in order to ensure respect for and protection of religious symbols, sacred places, sites and shrines;
12. *Appeals* to parliaments, in cooperation with their national governments, to adopt strategies and policies aimed at combating the defamation of religions, religious intolerance and the desecration of religious symbols and shrines.