



3rd WORLD CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT

United Nations, Geneva, 19-21 July 2010

SP-CONF/2010/6-DR
4 March 2010

DRAFT OUTCOME DOCUMENT

(1) Accountability and representation lie at the heart of democracy. Parliament is the central institution of any democracy through which the will of the people is expressed, laws are passed and government is held to account. We, the Speakers of the world's parliaments, have convened at the United Nations in Geneva to discuss how our parliaments can help secure global democratic accountability for the common good in a world of crisis.

(2) Since our last summit in 2005, the world has undergone complex and profound changes. We are living in an increasingly multi-polar world characterized by deepening economic globalization coupled with radical changes in international economic relations and the balance of power. We also see greater popular support for multilateralism and the promotion of democracy in international relations.

(3) Since 2005, economic growth and development has been stymied by a global financial and economic crisis. Although the global economy today shows signs of recovery, the economic foundations remain weak with deep-rooted problems that have not yet been addressed. The economic crisis is compounded by challenges relating to climate change, food and energy security, and public health, the solutions to which still elude us. Devastating natural disasters have become more prevalent and non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons and organized crime have increased substantially.

(4) We are more than ever convinced that only by working together can we address these and other global challenges successfully and make a better world for all citizens. While we may differ on matters of policy and action, we are unanimous in our belief

that all countries, large and small, rich and poor, need to work together, seeking solutions through multilateral channels with the United Nations at the centre. We reaffirm the commitment of our parliaments to engage fully in support of this effort.

A. Parliaments and democracy

(5) Our parliaments are national institutions, inseparable from our differing histories and cultures. We are proud of our sovereign independence which it is our duty and wish to defend.

(6) We recognize that democratization is a continuing process for all parliaments and that it is necessary to promote sound democratic practice within our parliaments, whether they are recently established or have been in existence for centuries. We are committed to assisting each other in this effort, with the stronger institutions providing assistance to the weaker ones, with increased sharing of good practices for the greater benefit of all, and with a constant concern for the fuller participation of our citizens in national and global governance in the interests of their common good.

(7) As a collegiate body of the world's parliaments, we rely on the collective experience of our members. Together we pledge to make our parliaments more representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective. We will also promote standards of integrity for parliaments and their members, recognizing that membership of parliament is first and foremost a public service, and will uphold the highest standards of ethics in public life.

(8) We emphatically state that the proportion of women in parliament today is not sufficient and we pledge to redouble our efforts to reach a global average of thirty per cent of women in parliaments by 2015.

(9) We are preoccupied by a widely held perception of politics as a closed space where there is little room for opposing opinions and consideration of alternative policies. We will do all we can to ensure that the rights of all members of parliament are guaranteed; they must be free to speak out without fear of harassment or

punishment, even when they do not toe the party line. Equally, we are committed to foster political tolerance among citizens and political leaders through education and communication.

(10) Defending our parliaments also means that we will be outspoken in our condemnation when parliaments are dissolved in breach of the national constitution or when members of parliament are arbitrarily deprived of their mandate or otherwise have their human rights violated. We have seen a number of instances of this in recent times. We deplore the usurpation of democratic governments by force and the persecution of elected representatives of the people.

B. Parliaments on the international stage

(11) We believe that the world will continue to be confronted by crises that will pose tremendous challenges to the prevailing order. Such crises, however, if they are managed democratically, can provide a springboard for vital and regenerative change.

(12) We are concerned that this is not generally the case at present. The democracy gap persists. Many would say it is widening. Those who have never had a voice in domestic or global affairs remain excluded.

(13) While the recent convulsions that began with a financial crisis are officially over, millions continue to suffer from the aftershocks. For untold numbers of people the challenges of daily survival have worsened. Their suffering will endure and, if nothing is done, go largely ignored. We remain convinced that one vital way to bridge the growing gap between those who have the means to live comfortable lives and those who are wholly dispossessed is to establish more participatory practices at the international level.

(14) The time has come for an imaginative leap of faith. Today's multilateral systems should allow for much greater consideration for the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of people everywhere whose voices go unheard.

(15) We therefore call once again for greater parliamentary involvement in international cooperation and we reiterate the recommendations we have made at our past two conferences. We emphasize that our parliaments must be more active in international affairs by contributing to and monitoring international negotiations, by overseeing the enforcement of agreements that have been reached by governments, and by ensuring national compliance with international norms and the rule of law.

(16) Building political will and public support and ensuring national ownership and effective implementation of international agreements can only come about if parliaments and their members are well informed and actively engaged, both nationally and internationally, throughout the consultation and negotiating process. We are committed to strengthening our capacity to assume this role and we call on our governments to work with us to this effect.

(17) Consultation between parliaments and governments prior to and during negotiations of international agreements should take place as a matter of course. It is not practical to expect parliaments to ratify international agreements and legislate for their enforcement without involving them in the earlier stages of negotiation. More broadly speaking, the presence of parliamentarians within multilateral negotiating fora would reinforce the voice of those on whose behalf the negotiations are being made and provide for the long-term viability of the outcomes.

(18) Our involvement in international cooperation must be firmly rooted in the daily work of our parliaments, much of which relates to ensuring accountability. It is therefore essential that we develop indicators against which our parliaments can measure progress in governmental programs to address major challenges, such as climate change food and energy security.

C. The United Nations

(19) The United Nations is the most universal, representative and authoritative international organization of sovereign States and it plays an irreplaceable role in international affairs. We pledge our support to the Organization and will continue to

extend our cooperation in keeping with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

(20) We take note of the reforms undertaken so far by the United Nations. It has established new bodies that are beginning to prove their worth, and is working to bring more logical coherence to its operations at the country level. There is, however, scope for further reform to enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness and to make the United Nations more democratic and representative. We encourage the United Nations to continue this exercise, particularly as it relates to reinvigorating the UN General Assembly and modernizing the Security Council. We also believe that Member States have to invest more in development, global peace and security, and human rights, and in integrating gender equality into all UN programs and activities.

(21) We commend the United Nations for enshrining the world's development objectives in the Millennium Development Goals. We endorse these goals and the 21 targets into which they are translated. Much has been done to meet these targets, but if current trends persist, an alarming number of them will not be met. Governments, and in particular those from the industrialized countries, must honour the pledges they have made to fund these efforts notwithstanding the difficulties engendered by the financial and economic crisis.

(22) In this, as in so many other areas, we all stand to gain from building a closer and more powerful relationship between parliaments and the United Nations. The Millennium Development Goals will not be met without a strong sense of accountability accompanying all efforts. Democracy, security, development, human rights and gender equality are inextricably linked. Our parliaments can do more to ensure that development goals are taken into account in our daily work and translated into national programs and laws. We pledge to support these efforts, monitor progress closely and do our part in meeting the targets by 2015.

(23) We recognize that much has already been achieved. Looking back to our first summit in 2000, we see ten years of encouraging progress. Our parliaments have gained from an awakening within the United Nations to our crucial role in providing

the legislative foundations for development and in strengthening the rule of law which is essential to development. Recent summit outcomes have acknowledged this, particularly in the area of development aid. The United Nations has also started to realize the need to support and nurture fragile parliaments as it sets out to rebuild states emerging from conflicts. The United Nations has also shown a new interest in keeping parliaments duly informed of their agenda and activities.

(24) Yet much more needs to be done and we look to the Inter-Parliamentary Union to help forge a closer and more effective working relationship between the United Nations and our parliaments.

D. The Inter-Parliamentary Union

(25) We take pride in the IPU and its many accomplishments stretching over three centuries. Our predecessors who founded the Organization over one hundred and twenty years ago and their successors have helped lay a solid foundation for international political cooperation and multilateralism.

(26) Today, the IPU is the international organization of national parliaments and the global parliamentary counterpart of the United Nations. It facilitates political dialogue and cooperation within and between countries. It promotes and defends democracy. It develops standards, disseminates good practices and provides concrete support in constructing democratic parliaments. It builds capacity in our parliaments in support of peace, security and development. It defends the human rights of members of parliament and promotes respect for universal human rights norms and principles. It works in support of gender equality and women's participation in political and public life. It assists our parliaments in coping with a growing international agenda and in developing a parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations.

(27) The IPU is an essential global forum for parliamentary political debate, dialogue and cooperation. It is also an action-oriented organization that carries out practical activities in support of our parliaments. It operates on a small budget and is not

burdened by a large bureaucracy. It is a unique entity within the panoply of multilateral organizations.

(28) We invite the IPU to expand and strengthen its programs in support of our parliaments. We view the Organization as a unique center of excellence in relation to parliaments and democracy and we wish to see the IPU developing this work further. The IPU can also do more to assist our parliaments in addressing the Millennium Development Goals and in coping with some of today's foremost global challenges, such as climate change, food and energy security, public health, migration disaster reduction and organized crime.

(29) We affirm that the IPU is the international body best suited to build the relationship between parliaments and the United Nations. As an Observer to the United Nations since 2002, the IPU has played this role to increasing effect. It is now time for such cooperation to be set on a firmer footing. To this end, we encourage the United Nations, its Member States and the IPU to work towards the conclusion of a new and improved cooperation agreement between the two institutions in all areas and to endow it with the strategic force that it needs to become operational across the United Nations system.

(30) In keeping with the recommendations of the first two Speakers' Conferences to bridge the democracy deficit in international relations, we also encourage the IPU to promote greater accountability and transparency of the Bretton-Woods institutions at both national and international levels. At the national level, this will entail more direct and formal interaction between parliaments and representatives of the World Bank and the IMF. At the global level, we encourage the IPU to help keep parliaments informed of decisions adopted by the Boards of the World Bank and the IMF and to help strengthen the capacities of parliaments to exercise their role in the budget process and economic decision-making in general.

(31) We recognize the need to strengthen the IPU and to endow the Organization with the political, material, financial and human resources it requires to carry out the mission we recommend. We propose to work with the IPU to achieve these objectives

and invite all parliaments and governments to extend their support. We encourage the IPU to work with States towards the conclusion of an international legal instrument that would safeguard the IPU's quintessential parliamentary independence while formally conferring upon it the status of an international organization established through a convention concluded by States.

(32) We conclude our deliberations with a sense of cautious optimism. The world is facing multiple crises on an unprecedented scale. As never before, however, there is a shared understanding that we can only address these challenges by working together and we, who have a popular mandate to represent the people, will not be found wanting. We, in our parliaments, can and will do our part in securing global democratic accountability for the common good of humankind.