



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

**Resolution adopted unanimously by the 112th IPU Assembly
(Manila, 8 April 2005)**

**NATURAL DISASTERS: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN PREVENTION,
REHABILITATION, RECONSTRUCTION AND THE PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE
GROUPS**

The 112th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Concerned that earthquakes, tsunamis, torrential rains, heavy snows, high winds (including typhoons and tornados), floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions, forest fires, droughts, locust infestations and other serious natural disasters are a great transnational threat to all people, that socially vulnerable poor people in developing nations particularly vulnerable to disasters are frequently the ones who suffer great damage and become internally displaced persons or refugees after a natural disaster strikes, and that the secondary effects of natural disasters, such as food shortages and the deterioration of sanitary conditions, become enduring and serious problems,

Aware that all disasters, including man-made disasters, are a direct threat to human beings; and that from the viewpoint of guaranteeing human security, it is essential when they strike to ensure that aid truly addresses the suffering of those affected by the disaster, and to increase the capacity of individuals and local communities to take the initiative,

Taking note that over 270,000 innocent citizens of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and other countries were killed on 26 December 2004 as a result of the major earthquake off the coast of Sumatra and the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, that tens of thousands of people are still missing, and that many hundreds of others lost their lives as a result of the aftershocks in Indonesia three months later,

Expressing its sincere condolences to those who lost loved ones in the tsunami disaster and the aftershocks, as well as to the people, parliaments and governments of the nations affected by the disaster,

Praising the leadership role played by the affected nations in responding to the disaster and *holding in high regard* the speedy cooperation demonstrated by the international community in carrying out relief activities in response to the United Nations appeal for emergency support,

Appreciating the fact that the United Nations and its specialised agencies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other institutions such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as well as governments and so many international humanitarian organisations, have come forward immediately to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of the victims of the tsunami disaster and to provide emergency health care, shelter and food to the people of the affected countries, and *expressing respect and thanks* to the United Nations Secretary-General for his prompt action to visit the affected countries in order to carry out an on-the-spot investigation into the devastation and havoc caused by the tsunami,

Recalling the Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention in the Aftermath of the Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004, adopted at the special meeting held in Jakarta on 6 January 2005 of the leaders of the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami, and the numerous other discussions that have taken place on this subject at the international level,

Recalling the resolution adopted by the 108th IPU Conference, held in Santiago in 2003, on international cooperation for the prevention and management of transborder natural disasters and their impact on the regions concerned,

Aware that the damage from the recent earthquake and tsunami was worsened due to the lack of a tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean rim area and the lack in the affected area of disaster prevention awareness regarding the cause-and-effect relationship between major earthquakes and tsunamis,

Noting that the Special Session on the Indian Ocean Disaster held at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, 18–22 January 2005) emphasised the importance of comprehensively evaluating all the lessons learned from the tsunami disaster and continuing international and regional dialogues and discussions to build an early warning system,

Noting that a report of UNICEF estimated that over one third of those who died in the recent earthquake and tsunami were children, and *deeply concerned* that the surviving children who have suffered from the disaster are now being exposed to such threats as human trafficking and infectious diseases,

Emphasising the importance of emergency humanitarian relief activities promoted in response to this tragedy by UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), WHO and others, for both the survival and the protection of children,

Reconfirming the importance of a multifaceted contribution by parliaments and parliamentarians to emergency humanitarian relief for women and children who are vulnerable in post-disaster situations,

Recognising the need for psychological assistance and counselling to eliminate the mental trauma for millions of innocent victims of major human disasters, and *acknowledging* the effectiveness of the various kinds of support provided by non-governmental organisations,

Considering the importance of international cooperation, solidarity and partnership, as well as good governance at all levels, in strengthening global disaster reduction activities,

1. *Calls upon* the international community to renew its determination to prevent disasters where possible and to minimise the impact of unavoidable natural disasters by making maximum use of past lessons learned in order to prepare for natural disasters, which can strike anywhere in the world, and to achieve the common desire of all humankind to prevent extensive damage, and particularly the loss of life;
2. *Proposes* that nations around the world that are frequently struck by disasters further strengthen their cooperation in disaster prevention efforts; *encourages* them to provide and share know-how, expertise, technology, and other information for the establishment of an early warning system; and *urges* concerned governments to move forward with concrete efforts to establish a tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean region under international coordination, administered by United Nations entities, including the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR);
3. *Calls upon* the parliaments of every nation to urge their governments to support, in partnership with the United Nations, effective projects conducted by international organisations such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UNICEF, IOM, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), WHO, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to support children, women, the poorest and other members of society who are vulnerable in post-disaster situations;
4. *Proposes* that the parliaments of affected nations and international organisations involved in relief efforts call upon governments to implement plans for the protection and survival of children, including (i) measures to combat human trafficking and to support family reunification, (ii) the establishment of child protection facilities and temporary housing for single-parent families, (iii) services to relieve psychological trauma, (iv) measures to control infectious diseases, and (v) nutritional support for children;
5. *Calls upon* the parliaments of the affected countries and their neighbours to protect from human trafficking, infectious diseases and other secondary damage children who have been orphaned or who remain unidentified after the disaster, by disseminating information, inter alia by drawing society's attention to this matter and educating the government and police, and by appealing to their national governments to take institutional preventive measures, including the proper and prompt strengthening of the legal system, for example through the temporary suspension of adoption procedures;
6. *Urges* the parties concerned to be particularly attentive to the importance of local ownership of the reconstruction process; *suggests* that efforts should be made at all levels to promote the participation of vulnerable populations in planning, decision-making and operational activities, thereby making reconstruction more effective and strengthening local democracy; and *urges* all concerned in the reconstruction effort to take steps to create societies and economies that are environmentally and ecologically sustainable;

7. *Urges* the United Nations and other institutions of the international community, and particularly donor countries and the international financial institutions, to honour their pledges of funding and assistance in support of the national rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of affected countries; and *encourages* IPU Member Parliaments whose governments have made pledges of assistance to take decisive steps towards their realisation in a timely and urgent manner;
8. *Strongly urges* all parties engaged in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process to be rigorous in the fight against every form of corruption, including profiteering, in the drafting and management of all programmes;
9. *Calls upon* the countries affected by the tsunami disaster to be responsible, accountable and transparent and to provide the international community as quickly as possible with death tolls and all other relevant information regarding the resulting damage in order to ensure the delivery of aid suitable for the actual situation and to facilitate decisions relating to the distribution of assistance; and *further calls upon* the affected countries to make every effort to ensure that such assistance is used as quickly as possible for the direct benefit of the tsunami victims, and is used conscientiously to rebuild their respective nations;
10. *Recognises* the important role played by both the print and the electronic media in providing updated information regarding the tsunami disaster, in encouraging the world community to provide assistance to the tsunami victims and in disseminating all relevant information on this disaster; and *urges* the media to do the same in all disaster situations;
11. *Calls upon* all countries to be prepared to face such natural disasters in the future and to help developing countries to acquire natural disaster warning systems and natural disaster preparation plans; and *further calls upon* scientifically developed countries to share information on such disasters with the rest of the world, the United Nations and appropriate international institutions;
12. *Calls upon* the parliaments of every nation to support all disaster prevention measures, humanitarian aid and long-term reconstruction assistance implemented by governments, international organisations and others; and *urges* governments to take part in the international coordination of assistance in order to ensure the efficient use of available resources, without prejudice to bilateral support and aid provided by individual countries or international organisations to afflicted nations;
13. *Calls upon* Member Parliaments to urge their governments to draw up or strengthen existing legislative policies relating to the creation, training and support of local field disaster response teams in all areas, and particularly disaster-prone areas, to predict, prepare for, plan for and prevent natural and man-made disasters, to cope with and mitigate the effects of the resulting damage, and to relieve, rehabilitate and resurrect areas affected by disasters, employing inter alia the following methods:
 - (a) Capacity-building through the establishment of early warning systems and hazard mapping, and by determining escape routes, setting up evacuation centres and preparing disaster prevention measures;

- (b) The establishment of quick and efficient disaster reporting mechanisms, providing information on inter alia the extent of the damage, the number of affected families, and the number of dead, missing and injured people, prioritising the needs to be met, coping with and minimising the damage, and distributing relief supplies such as food, non-food items, emergency shelter materials and provisions for rehabilitation, including financial aid, housing and loans;
 - (c) Creating emergency medium- and long-term rehabilitation plans, giving particular consideration to women, children, the elderly and other members of society who are most vulnerable in every aspect of a disaster;
14. *Calls upon* Member Parliaments to create strategically located regional disaster training, logistics and reaction centres, inter alia to train local field disaster response teams, to share international technical know-how, expertise, technology, and other information relating to disaster prevention, training and management, to pre-position emergency equipment for quick delivery and use by international response teams that respond immediately in affected areas using information previously gathered on disaster-prone areas, and to coordinate, mobilise and liaise with local field disaster response teams in the affected areas; and *further urges* collaboration between these regional disaster training, logistics and reaction centres and international humanitarian organisations such as those of the United Nations, its affiliates and agencies, and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, without prejudice to bilateral support and aid provided by individual countries or international organisations to afflicted nations;
15. *Invites* all Member Parliaments of the IPU to take urgent action to follow up on the recommendations contained in this resolution, and thus reaffirm their commitment to provide steadfast support for all initiatives, especially during times of extreme emergency, and to preserve the sanctity of life, alleviate human suffering, and uplift the dignity of all peoples.