



**THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF PARLIAMENT AND THE MEDIA IN PROVIDING
THE PUBLIC WITH OBJECTIVE INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY ON ARMED
CONFLICTS AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TERRORISM**

Preliminary draft resolution prepared by the co-Rapporteurs
Dr. Zoltán Szabó (Hungary) and Mr. Mohammad Salim (India)

The 113th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

- (1) *Observing* that armed conflicts and the menace of terrorism constitute serious threats to international peace and security,
- (2) *Conscious* that terrorist acts are largely intended to shatter the structures and cohesion of civil society, which must respond to this assault on its values without compromising its openness, its humanity, or its commitment to human rights and individuals' rights and freedoms,
- (3) *Recalling* that the IPU, through the resolutions it adopted at the 95th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Istanbul in 1996; at the 105th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Havana in 2001; and at the 107th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Marrakech in 2002, has inter alia condemned international terrorism as a danger to the social and political stability of States, a threat to the global development of democratic structures, and an assault on the safety and individual freedoms of citizens, and has called on all States to adopt appropriate measures to tackle terrorism and its social, political and economic causes,
- (4) *Recalling further* United Nations Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001), 1373 (2001) and 1566 (2004) on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts,
- (5) *Stressing* the need to combat the threat posed by international terrorism to world peace and international security by all means, and in conformity with the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and applicable United Nations human rights conventions,
- (6) *Recalling* the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted at the 161st session of the Inter-Parliamentary Council held in Cairo in 1997, which stressed "The state of democracy presupposes freedom of opinion and expression; this right implies freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers",

(7) *Drawing attention* to the fact that parliaments are accountable to the people and need to convey positions on terrorism or armed conflict based on their assessments, and that they play a major role in determining the parameters within which a free press and media should operate in their coverage of information relating to terrorism and armed conflicts,

(8) *Also drawing attention* to the fact that parliaments, by enacting the necessary legislation, play a crucial role in the prevention and avoidance of armed conflicts and terrorism,

(9) *Convinced* that the world's parliaments and parliamentarians can make a major contribution, through national as well as international cooperation, to the promotion of the objective of reporting information to the public, especially on armed conflict and the struggle against terrorism,

(10) *Reiterating* that freedom of the press is one of the basic requirements of democracy,

(11) *Recognizing* that the media plays an especially important role in the era of globalization at both the international and the national levels, and that this role must be considered adequately by policymakers and parliaments,

(12) *Convinced* that parliaments and the media can help in facilitating understanding and cooperation among peoples,

(13) *Expressing deep concern* at the attacks perpetrated against journalists, including the killing of journalists, who cover situations of armed conflict and terrorism, and also at the wrongful detention of many such journalists,

Role of parliaments in providing objective information

1. *Urges* parliaments to influence policymakers to explore ways and means to enhance objective coverage by the media, while limiting the gains uninhibited coverage may provide to terrorists and avoiding the direct or indirect glorification of their cause;
2. *Urges* parliaments to make the necessary legislative decisions on what steps their nations should take against terrorism;
3. *Further urges* parliaments closely to monitor whether government bodies act properly in defending citizens;
4. *Calls upon* parliaments to consider, in consultation with the media fraternity, formulating appropriate guidelines for media personnel so that media programmes and advertising content do not incite violence, violate standards of law and order or in any way glorify violence;

Role of media in providing objective information

5. *Stresses* that a free media is a prerequisite for any democracy, particularly as it provides objective and impartial information to the people, including during armed conflicts and situations involving terrorism;
6. *Emphasizes* the increasing importance of the media in providing information to the public on major incidents, including those involving terrorism and armed conflicts;
7. *Recognizes* that in addition to its legal rights and obligations, the media has an ethical responsibility to citizens and society, at a time when information and communication play an important role in the development of society and democratic life;
8. *Also recognises* that the media plays an important role in providing all components of civil society with credible and relevant information, thereby enabling parliamentarians and the people to make well-informed decisions;
9. *Acknowledges* that the media plays a central role in the construction of social frameworks for politics and that it can both spur and deter the actions of conflicting parties in cases of armed conflict and terrorism;
10. *Reaffirms* that the media can be an alternative forum for non-violent dialogue and an effective communication channel;
11. *Urges* the media to provide a balanced and correct picture of the events in situations of armed conflict;
12. *Also urges* the media to show restraint in reporting unconfirmed information relating to armed conflicts and the struggle against terrorism with the sole aim of obtaining increased publicity;
13. *Urges* the media to refuse to highlight terrorists' statements aimed at gaining broader publicity and inciting people;
14. *Strongly deplores* the killing of many journalists, and the imprisonment of many more in various armed conflicts and terrorist activities all over the world;

Imperative of right to information

15. *Calls upon* the IPU to promote freedom of opinion and expression as a fundamental right, subject to reasonable restrictions;
16. *Emphasizes* the need to make human rights a "living reality", thereby enlightening public opinion and helping people to take cognizance of their rights, especially in situations involving terrorism and armed conflict;

17. *Acknowledges* the principle of freedom of expression in cyberspace, with reasonable restrictions, including such restrictions as may be required in the struggle against terrorism and in cases of armed conflicts;

Objective information on armed conflicts and terrorism

18. *Strongly urges* all Member Parliaments of the IPU to assume, before their States and citizens, in conformity with their national legislation and the international obligations of States, responsibility for implementing and enforcing, through the enactment of national laws, the international agreements that have been concluded to combat and prevent armed conflicts and terrorism;
19. *Recommends* that parliaments consider the establishment of national terrorist information response centres, to make use of the relevant information and place it in the required perspective;
20. *Also recommends* that the media consider adopting a voluntary code of conduct, or appropriate guidelines, for reporting on armed conflicts and terrorism;
21. *Further recommends* that the media should play a role in peacebuilding activities, for example by developing innovative programmes that can articulate people's needs in these areas and create a space for dialogue by highlighting mutual respect, collaboration and reconciliation;

Inter-Parliamentary cooperation to combat terrorism and armed conflict

22. *Calls* upon parliamentarians the world over, in conformity with United Nations Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1566 (2004) on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, to play their part in promoting international cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts;
23. *Emphasizes* the need for regular debates in the parliaments concerned on armed conflict and international terrorism, and the need for appropriate media coverage of the same;
24. *Expresses* the need for a more intensive inter-parliamentary exchange of information and experience in regard to the implementation of effective legislative measures in this field, and stresses the supportive role played by the IPU to enhance media objectivity on issues relating to armed conflict and terrorism;
25. *Reaffirms* that parliament is the institution par excellence that embodies the diverse attributes and opinions of society and reflects and channels this diversity in the political process, and that one of its objectives is to defuse tensions and maintain a balance between the rival aspirations of diversity and uniformity, and of the individual and the collective, with the aim of strengthening social cohesion and solidarity;

26. *Reiterates* the call on parliaments made at the 109th IPU Assembly held in Geneva in 2003 to do everything possible “at the national level to facilitate the establishment of standing mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, as a way to promote action geared to achieving real peace”;
27. *Calls* on parliaments to support the inter-governmental structures, mechanisms and processes that promote stabilization, reconciliation and peaceful development at the regional and subregional levels, and to enhance their parliamentary dimension.