



**THE USE OF MEDIA, INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA, TO ENHANCE  
CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOCRACY**

**Revised preliminary draft resolution submitted by the co-Rapporteurs  
Ms. C. Charlton (Canada) and Ms. M.T. Kubayi (South Africa)**

The 128<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

- (1) Considering that citizen engagement by parliamentarians has the potential to foster greater respect for democracy and democratic institutions, thus countering declining voter participation and promoting greater accountability,
- (2) Aware that increasing numbers of citizens and parliamentarians are using social media globally and in particular in developed countries,
- (3) Considering the potential of social media to facilitate greater citizen engagement through two-way interaction between parliamentarians and citizens,
- (4) Bearing in mind that media, including social media, may also enhance citizen engagement by allowing people to create networks, motivate each other, engage in monitoring activities, and contribute to the decision-making process,
- (5) Affirming the need to enhance the participation and inclusion of women in the democratic process,
- (6) Also affirming the need to enhance youth participation and inclusion in the democratic process,
- (7) Underscoring the potential of social media to enhance parliamentarians' engagement with youth and to raise awareness of the problems, needs and aspirations of youth,
- (8) Aiming to ensure that citizen engagement efforts do not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, socio-economic status, place of residence, disability, ethnicity or political affiliation,
- (9) Convinced of the need to overcome digital divides, particularly in developing countries, which result when some groups and regions in society do not have the same access to information and communication technologies as others,
- (10) Also considering that the digital divide may impede citizens' access to information provided through social media, hence the importance of guaranteeing all citizens access to information technologies as well as using traditional media to keep the public informed,

(11) Considering that citizens' ability to engage with parliamentarians depends not only on access to technology but also on their knowledge of parliament and parliamentary procedure,

(12) Taking note of the fact that traditional media continue to be the main sources of information on parliament for much of the world's population,

(13) Mindful of the fact that traditional media are facing challenges in responding to rapid technological and financial changes, which may affect their ability to provide information, including information about parliament,

(14) Concerned that social media may also be used to send hate messages, sometimes anonymously, and allow people with malicious intentions to organize and mobilize others, which may undermine democracy,

(15) Highlighting the need to respect laws regarding defamation and libel,

(16) Aware of the significant challenges that would be encountered in developing a universally enforceable code of conduct for social media users,

(17) Encouraged that the IPU and the ASGP are working on social media guidelines for parliaments,

(18) Convinced that parliamentarians need to share information about the potential of social media to enhance citizen engagement and representative democracy, its risks, and the technical requirements needed to realize its potential,

(19) Mindful of the watchdog role of journalists in the political system and the need for journalists to be accountable to the public,

(20) Convinced that corruption represents a serious threat to the rule of law, democracy, human rights, equity and social justice,

(21) Underscoring the right to freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

(22) Recalling United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 20/8 of 29 June 2012 on "The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet",

1. Recommends that parliaments develop strategies and guidelines for enhancing citizen engagement in the democratic process through the use of media, including social media;
2. Calls on parliaments to actively provide information to the public on parliamentary business, debates and procedures;
3. Encourages parliaments to include in those guidelines additional provisions that address the need for mutual respect among parliamentarians and between parliamentarians and the public when interacting through media, including social media;

4. Calls on the IPU to collect and make publicly available the guidelines developed by its Member Parliaments, and to develop best practices in the use of social media to enhance citizen engagement;
5. Encourages parliaments to use media, including social media, as part of a platform to interact with citizens, while ensuring that any social media engagement would not completely replace off-line engagement, including through traditional media;
6. Urges parliaments and parliamentarians to ensure that their citizen engagement efforts are accessible to all regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status, place of residence, disability, ethnicity or political affiliation;
7. Encourages parliaments to provide assistance to parliamentarians in the use of media, including social media, as a way of engaging citizens and promoting democracy;
8. Urges parliaments to take effective measures aimed at narrowing the digital divide, which prevents a large portion of the population from gaining access to social media platforms;
9. Urges parliaments to provide parliamentarians with the resources, assistance, training, equipment, technical support and access that may be necessary to engage citizens both online and offline;
10. Also urges parliaments and parliamentarians to respect the right to freedom of expression, both online and offline;
11. Underscores that any regulation of the media must be consistent with international human rights obligations in relation to the right to freedom of expression;
12. Calls on all social media users to respect their country's laws regarding defamation and libel in accordance with international human rights law;
13. Also calls on all social media users to refrain from hate speech or incitement to violence in accordance with international human rights law;
14. Further calls on parliaments to provide parliamentarians with information and assistance regarding legal and other issues pertaining to defamation, libel, the protection of privacy and confidentiality;
15. Invites parliaments to examine and put in place where necessary a regulatory framework to ensure that mobile and online platforms protect the rights of all persons in a representative and participatory democracy;
16. Proposes that social media and technologies be incorporated into laws and regulations governing access to public information.
17. Urges parliamentarians, especially women parliamentarians, to use social media to support each other and interact with communities to enhance women's participation and inclusion in democratic processes;
18. Also urges parliamentarians to use social media to increase their engagement with youth and raise awareness of youth problems, needs and aspirations,