



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

***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 counter declining voter participation and foster greater respect for democracy and democratic institutions,
- (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 awareness of youth issues,
- (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) *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,

(11) *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,

(12) *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 about parliament,

(13) *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,

(14) *Affirming* the need to respect the privacy of parliamentarians taking part in citizen engagement activities,

(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 ways in which social media can be used to enhance citizen engagement and representative democracy, as well as about the risks involved,

(19) *Mindful* of 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* parliamentarians to ensure that any social media engagement is accompanied by and combined with 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. *Also encourages* parliaments to use media, including social media, as part of a platform to interact with citizens;
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 the right to freedom of expression;
12. *Calls* on all social media users to respect their country's laws regarding defamation and libel;
13. *Also calls* on all social media users to refrain from hate speech or incitement to violence;
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. *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;
17. *Also urges* parliamentarians to use social media to increase their engagement with youth and raise awareness of youth issues.