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131st IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 12 - 16.10.2014

Assembly
Item 2

A/131/2-P.10
11 October 2014

Consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda

Request for the inclusion of an emergency item in the agenda of the 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union submitted by the delegation of Belgium

On 11 October 2014, the Secretary General of the IPU received from the Inter-Parliamentary Group of Belgium a request for the inclusion in the agenda of the 131st Assembly of an emergency item entitled:

“Parliamentary support for an immediate and robust
international response to the Ebola epidemic”.

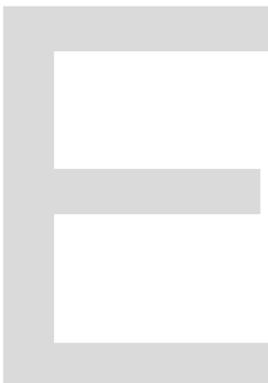
Delegates to the 131st Assembly will find attached the text of the communication submitting the request ([Annex I](#)), as well as an explanatory memorandum ([Annex II](#)) and a draft resolution ([Annex III](#)) in support thereof.

The 131st Assembly will be required to take a decision on the request of the delegation of Belgium on Monday, 13 October 2014.

Under the terms of Assembly Rule 11.1, any Member of the IPU may request the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda. Such a request must be accompanied by a brief explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution which clearly define the scope of the subject covered by the request. The Secretariat shall communicate the request and any such documents immediately to all Members.

Furthermore, Assembly Rule 11.2 stipulates that:

- (a) A request for the inclusion of an emergency item must relate to a major event of international concern on which it appears necessary for the IPU to express its opinion. Such a request must receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in order to be accepted;
- (b) The Assembly may place only one emergency item on its agenda. Should several requests obtain the requisite majority, the one having received the largest number of positive votes shall be accepted;
- (c) The authors of two or more requests for the inclusion of an emergency item may combine their proposals to present a joint one, provided that each of the original proposals relates to the same subject;
- (d) The subject of a proposal that has been withdrawn by its authors or rejected by the Assembly cannot be included in the draft resolution submitted on the emergency item, unless it is clearly referred to in the request and title of the subject adopted by the Assembly.



**COMMUNICATION ADRESSED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL
BY THE SECRETARY OF THE BELGIAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP**

11 October 2014

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

I am pleased to bring to your attention the request by the Inter-Parliamentary Group of Belgium to include in the agenda of the 131st IPU Assembly an emergency item entitled:

"Parliamentary support for an immediate and robust international response to the Ebola epidemic ".

Please find enclosed a brief explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution in support of this request.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Marc DE ROUCK
Secretary of the Inter-Parliamentary
Group of Belgium

**PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR AN IMMEDIATE AND ROBUST
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE EBOLA EPIDEMIC**

Explanatory memorandum submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Group of Belgium

Africa is experiencing one of the worst health disasters in its history. The countries currently affected (Guinea, Nigeria, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone) are home to approximately 250 million people. Over 7,000 people have already been infected with the Ebola virus, with almost 50 per cent dying, and the contagion is spreading to neighbouring countries (northern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali).

Ms. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), has warned, "This is not just an outbreak. This is not just a public health crisis. This is a social crisis, a humanitarian crisis, an economic crisis, and a threat to national security well beyond the outbreak zones."

According to Mr. David Nabarro, Senior United Nations System Coordinator for Ebola, to be effective, the response has "to be scaled up some 20 times from current levels", but it will take two to three months to put in place response systems.

Noting that there "will soon be more cases in Liberia alone than in the four-decade history of the disease" and that the "gravity and scale of the situation now require a level of international action unprecedented for a health emergency", United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposed the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), which is to deploy a first team at the end of the month.

Determining that "the unprecedented extent of the Ebola outbreak in Africa constitutes a threat to international peace and security", the UN Security Council has unanimously adopted a resolution sponsored by a record number of Member States.

The epidemic can be contained, says the WHO Director-General. She cites the examples of Nigeria and Senegal, where the government, the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Doctors Without Borders immediately took the requisite emergency action.

Parliaments must insist that government do what is needed to protect their people and stop the alarming spread of this disease.

**PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR AN IMMEDIATE AND ROBUST
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE EBOLA EPIDEMIC**

Draft resolution submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Group of BELGIUM

The 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

- (1) *Considering* that the Ebola virus disease is a serious, often fatal illness,
- (2) *Also considering* that the Ebola epidemic, which was officially declared on 22 March 2014 in Guinea, has spread through West Africa, affecting in particular Liberia and Sierra Leone, but also Nigeria and Senegal, and that the first cases have been reported in other countries worldwide,
- (3) *Further considering* that the World Health Organization (WHO) has designated the Ebola epidemic a Public Health Emergency of International Scope requiring coordinated international action, and that the United Nations Security Council has declared it a threat to international peace and security,
- (4) *Considering furthermore* that the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) most active on the ground, such as Doctors Without Borders and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, deem the international response dangerously inappropriate,
- (5) *Noting* the measures taken by the States affected in response to the Ebola epidemic, but *aware* that the means that the governments concerned will be able to mobilize may be insufficient,
- (6) *Bearing in mind* that the epidemic has brought to light shortcomings in the health systems and services of the countries affected and that there is an urgent need for support,
- (7) *Observing* that, because of those shortcomings and the international community's inertia, NGOs like Doctors Without Borders are obliged to act in areas that are in fact related to public health,
- (8) *Taking into consideration* that the countries concerned are already suffering shortages of food and drinking water and that their economies are collapsing as a result of disruptions to trade, commercial flights and harvesting,
- (9) *Taking into consideration also* that the achievements of the countries most affected in terms of consolidating peace and development risk being wiped out by the Ebola epidemic, and *underscoring* that the epidemic is compromising the stability of the worst affected countries and that, unless it is stopped, there will be fresh civil unrest and social tension, the political climate will deteriorate and the security situation worsen,
- (10) *Stressing* that national, regional and international action and cooperation are required to check epidemics of serious infectious diseases and that a coordinated international response to the Ebola epidemic is therefore a vital and immediate need,
- (11) *Emphasizing* that women are particularly at risk in this crisis, given their role in the community, especially in terms of health care,

1. *Deplores* the loss of life in the region devastated by the Ebola epidemic;
2. *Applauds* the commitment and contribution of those battling the epidemic on the front lines, notably national and humanitarian relief workers;
3. *Deeply regrets* the international community's slow and generally inadequate response and the time lost in drawing up an effective and coordinated strategy, while *acknowledging* that a number of States and international organizations have already provided critical assistance;
4. *Invites* parliaments to table discussion of the policy to be deployed to combat the Ebola epidemic at national and international level;
5. *Urges* the relevant United Nations bodies, especially WHO, which must play a lead role, to take all necessary emergency measures to reinforce their contribution to national, regional and international efforts to halt the outbreak of the Ebola virus;
6. *Welcomes* the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), which will work in close coordination with regional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community Of West African States;
7. *Calls on* the States that have the requisite means and international donors to mobilize without delay and to immediately furnish the countries affected and those providing them with assistance with essential financial resources and capacities, including medical and perhaps military material, that can be deployed on the spot (personnel, supplies, means of transport), paying particularly close attention to the protection of women and of health and medical staff entering into contact with infected persons;
8. *Appeals* to States, in particular those in the region, and all competent stakeholders providing the assistance required to deal with the Ebola epidemic to redouble their efforts to heighten public awareness and apply the security and health protocols and the preventive measures required to correct the misinformation circulating about the disease's transmission and the scope of the epidemic;
9. *Invites* the pharmaceutical industry and all public health stakeholders to considerably increase their efforts to find effective medicines and vaccines;
10. *Recommends* that the international community set up a rapid health response unit to cope with health crises of this kind and *urges* it to learn from the management of earlier epidemics/pandemics, such as avian influenza;
11. *Suggests*, with regard to development cooperation, that public health – and the prevention of health crises – be added as a core priority to cooperation programmes.