



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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134th IPU Assembly

Lusaka (Zambia), 19 - 23 March 2016



Assembly
Item 2

A/134/2-P.1
10 March 2016

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 134th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union submitted by the delegation of France

On 10 March 2016, the Secretary General received from the Executive President of the French Inter-Parliamentary Group and Leader of the French delegation a request and accompanying documents for the inclusion in the agenda of the 134th Assembly of an emergency item entitled:

"Giving an identity to the 230 million unregistered children in the world".

Delegates to the 134th 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 134th Assembly will be required to take a decision on the request of the delegation of France on Sunday, 20 March 2016.

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- (d) The subject of a proposal that has been withdrawn by its authors or rejected by the Assembly cannot be included in the draft resolution submitted on the emergency item, unless it is clearly referred to in the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.

#IPU134

**COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL BY THE EXECUTIVE
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP AND
LEADER OF THE FRENCH DELEGATION**

Paris, 9 March 2016

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

In accordance with the Rules of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and specifically Assembly Rule 11.1, the delegation of France would like to present a request to include in the agenda of the 134th IPU Assembly, which will be held in Lusaka (Zambia) from 19 to 23 March 2016, an emergency item on:

"Giving an identity to the 230 million unregistered children in the world".

The draft resolution on this proposed seeks to encourage parliaments and governments to sensitize parents to the need for registering children at birth and to set up effective and systematic registration mechanisms and give a civil status to children currently without an identity, in keeping with Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015.

Please find attached an explanatory memorandum in support of this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Michèle ANDRE
Executive President of the French
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Leader of the French delegation

GIVING AN IDENTITY TO THE 230 MILLION UNREGISTERED CHILDREN IN THE WORLD

Explanatory memorandum submitted by the delegation of France

The delegation of France to the 134th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union would like to propose the inclusion of an emergency item in the agenda of the Assembly in Lusaka entitled: *Giving an identity to the 230 million unregistered children in the world.*

In its report *Every child's birth right: Inequities and trends in birth registration*, published in 2013, UNICEF estimated that, based on a study of 158 countries representing 83 per cent of the world population of under five-year-olds, there are 230 million children who were not registered at birth. The absence of registration at birth exists on all continents: UNICEF estimates that there are 700,000 unregistered children in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2% of under-five-year-olds); 4 million in Latin America and the Caribbean (8% of under-five-year-olds); 6 million in the Middle East and North Africa (13% of under-five-year-olds); 32 million in Asia and the Pacific; 85 million in sub-Saharan Africa (66% of under-five-year olds) and 103 million in South Asia (61% of under-five-year-olds).

The right to birth registration has been enshrined for a long time in international conventions that have been widely ratified by the international community: Article 24, paragraph 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted on 16 December 1966 by the UN General Assembly and Article 7 paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989.

The reasons why these "ghost" or "invisible" children are not registered are several: lack of awareness by parents who do not consider registration as a fundamental human right; the existence of economic or geographical obstacles (cost of registration, journey to the registry office, time off from work to register the birth and thus reduced wages) or discrimination preventing families from registering the birth; uneducated parents or the difficulty they encounter in communicating in the official language of the country; discrimination against women who, in certain countries, are not entitled to register births themselves, and who must be accompanied by the child's father to do so, or who are fearful of registering the birth if the child was born out of wedlock.

The absence of registration has extremely serious consequences for children throughout their life.

In the absence of a civil status, i.e an identity, their basic rights are not recognized and may be violated in complete impunity. Without an identity, they will not be able to go to school or access health care, they risk becoming stateless, disregarded by the justice system for minors, will not be able to obtain a passport, a marriage certificate, open a bank account, sign a work or other type of contract or be able to prove their parent-child relationship for their children who, ipso facto, will be deprived of birth registration too.

Thus disregarded, these children without identities become easy victims of child trafficking (an estimated 1.2 million children are sold each year in the world), illegal child labour (over 168 million children work in the world), forced marriage and recruitment into armed forces (estimates put at over 250,000 the number of child soldiers in the world).

Furthermore, the absence of registration of these children accounts for “black holes” in national statistics and affects the implementation of public policy and the democratic functioning of the State’s institutions.

Aware of the gravity of the situation, the international community has incorporated the registration of children without an identity into the Sustainable Development Goals, to be achieved by 2030 (Goal 16, target 16.9 adopted on 25 September 2015 by the UN General Assembly), which the IPU has committed to promoting as a matter of priority.

The solution to the problem is political. It should translate into the allocation of resources to civil registry offices, the training of administrative staff, raising the awareness of families and setting up procedures and steps to facilitate the process and help overcome the material or cultural difficulties encountered by families when registering births.

The draft resolution proposed by France summarizes the main solutions agreed by the international community and whose effectiveness have been demonstrated on the ground in order to overcome obstacles identified at the time of birth registration: sensitize parents; prohibit discrimination; issue birth certificates free of charge or at a minimum cost; set up civil registry offices close to homes; allow women to register births themselves; develop innovative solutions to birth registration (UNICEF has put in place RapidSMS for birth registration on a platform that runs on freeware and allows users to convey to the authorities through their mobile phones the information necessary for birth registration that are entered in real time in the civil registry database); develop campaigns for regularizing children without an identity; and allocate to civil registry offices their own budgets. The role of parliaments in implementing these measures is pivotal, which is why the onus is on the IPU to sensitize parliamentarians to this problem.

GIVING AN IDENTITY TO THE 230 MILLION UNREGISTERED CHILDREN IN THE WORLD

Draft resolution submitted by the delegation of FRANCE

The 134th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

- (1) *Alarmed* by the existence, according to UNICEF estimates, of more than 230 million children under five years of age without an identity because they were not registered at birth and by the fact that one in every seven children registered in the world does not have a birth certificate attesting to his/her identity,
- (2) *Observing* that without a civil registry that allows children to be identified in time (by date of birth), space (by nationality), society (through the establishment of their social rights) and their families, these children are severely hampered throughout their lives (unable to register for school, travel, vote, marry, receive welfare benefits, acquire or sell properties, inherit, etc.) and fall victim to trafficking (illegal adoption, prostitution and criminal networks) and, due to a lack of legal protection, victims of illegal child labour, early marriage and forced recruitment into armed forces,
- (3) *Considering* that having a reliable, comprehensive and lasting civil registry is a prerequisite for drawing up credible electoral lists and that, as a consequence, the systematic registration of children influences both the subsequent exercise by these children of their political rights (the right to vote and the right to stand for election) and the legitimacy of electoral processes and representatives elected through those processes,
- (4) *Concerned* about the “black holes” in statistics caused by the absence of registration of these children, disrupting the planning of socioeconomic development plans, the formulation of actions to support population growth and the management of public services for children,
- (5) *Recalling* that pursuant to Article 24, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted on 16 December 1966 by the UN General Assembly, “Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name”,
- (6) *Also recalling* that Article 7, paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989 provides that “The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality ...”,
- (7) *Welcoming* the unanimous adoption on 25 September 2015 by the UN General Assembly (by the 193 Member States), of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 16, target 16.9, “By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration”,
 1. *Calls on* parliaments to urge their governments to sensitize parents to the need to register children at birth and permit the registration of children in registry offices regardless of race, ethnicity, language, religion or social status;
 2. *Invites* parliaments to make the issuance of birth certificates free of charge or, at least, to reduce to a minimum the cost of birth registration;
 3. *Calls for* registry offices to be set up as close as possible to homes by distributing them throughout the country with as wide coverage as possible;
 4. *Recommends* that parliaments enact laws to allow women to register births;
 5. *Calls for* support for the implementation of mobile applications that allow authorized persons (e.g. midwives, village leaders and school principals) to register births;
 6. *Invites* parliaments to promote campaigns on regularizing the status of children without an identity through roving public hearings that move from village to village;
 7. *Requests* that parliaments include in national budgets a specific credit line for civil registry.