



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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## The role of parliament in preventing outside interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States

***Explanatory memorandum submitted by the co-Rapporteurs,  
Ms. S. Koutra-Koukouma (Cyprus) and Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation)***

1. It is crucial for States to strictly observe their obligation not to interfere in the internal affairs of any other State so that nations may live together in peace. Any form of outside interference not only breaches the letter and spirit of the UN Charter, but also undermines global peace and security.

2. The draft Resolution: *The role of parliament in preventing outside interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States*, proposed for adoption at the 136<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, is based on the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and previous IPU resolutions. Similar issues have been raised regularly at IPU Assemblies. The 97<sup>th</sup> IPU Conference (Seoul, 1997) adopted a resolution entitled *Co-operation for world and regional security and stability, as well as for respect for all forms of the sovereignty and independence of States*. During the 104<sup>th</sup> IPU Conference (Jakarta, 2000) a resolution was passed by consensus entitled *The prevention of military and other coups against democratically elected governments and against the free will of the peoples expressed through direct suffrage, and action to address grave violations of the human rights of parliamentarians*. The 126<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly (Kampala, 2012) adopted a resolution by consensus entitled *Promoting and practising good governance as a means of advancing peace and security: Drawing lessons from recent events in the Middle East and North Africa*. The 128<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly (Quito, 2013) adopted a resolution by consensus entitled *Enforcing the responsibility to protect: The role of parliament in safeguarding civilians' lives*. And the 132<sup>nd</sup> IPU Assembly (Hanoi, 2015) is noted for a resolution entitled *International law as it relates to national sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and human rights*.

3. In the draft resolution, the co-Rapporteurs have focused on non-interference in States' internal affairs from a parliamentary standpoint. In preparing the draft, they drew on contributions from experts and parliamentarians, which were made during a hearing at the 135<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly (Geneva, October 2016). The hearing indicated that the absence of a universal definition of "outside interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States" often led to vague and contradictory explanations. The co-Rapporteurs would like to thank all concerned for their valuable contributions and insights, which helped them to draft the resolution.

4. The draft resolution appeals directly to national parliaments and parliamentarians as representatives of the people. It calls on them to continue their work to prevent outside interference in sovereign States' internal affairs. The primary way of achieving that aim would be to establish an IPU observatory. It would function within the framework of international law and particularly the UN Charter. The observatory would ensure early warning and prevention in cases of outside interference or intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States. The draft resolution asks the IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs to consider establishing such an observatory and to present proposals accordingly.

5. The draft resolution reaffirms that the cornerstone of international relations is the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, together with the principle of refraining from the use or threat of force. The draft focuses on how IPU Member Parliaments can prevent such outside interference within the framework of international law and through peace and security-promoting mechanisms.

6. Fallacious arguments about humanitarian aid or support for democratic governance have sometimes been used as grounds for intervention. The international community, acting through the United Nations, can and must use relevant diplomatic and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapter VI (peaceful dispute settlement) and Chapter VII (acts of aggression) of the UN Charter. Such peaceful means contribute to protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

7. The draft resolution recognizes the major role of women, young people and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the prevention and settlement of conflicts. Equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to promote and preserve peace and security are highlighted as important for those three groups. The draft resolution also stresses that women, young people and NGOs should increase their decision-making roles with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. National parliaments are therefore urged to establish legal bases and mechanisms to foster those increased roles.

8. The people of a State has the exclusive right to determine its own political future. The draft resolution therefore proposes to strongly condemn any attempts to overthrow democratically elected governments by military or other undemocratic means.

9. Within the framework of international parliamentary organizations, the IPU could act as a venue for maintaining parliamentary dialogue in cases of outside interference.

10. The *responsibility to protect* concept is particularly important and sensitive, and therefore merits special parliamentary attention. We note the serious concerns of the international community about the possibility of a selective application of the concept. We underscore that the responsibility to protect concept should not be used as a pretext for external interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

11. The IPU has regularly debated the problem of preventing outside interference in the internal affairs of States. Adopting the present resolution will continue that work. We believe that continuous attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign States need to be subjected to constant parliamentary scrutiny all over the world. That belief could be expressed in the adoption of the present resolution.