



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

# 136<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly

Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1- 5 April 2017



Assembly  
Item 2

A/136/2-P.2  
24 March 2017

## 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 136<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union submitted by the delegation of the United Kingdom

On 24 March 2017, the Secretary General received from the Chair of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union a request and accompanying documents for the inclusion in the agenda of the 136<sup>th</sup> Assembly of an emergency item entitled:

"The support of parliaments for global action to address unprecedented famine affecting millions of people".

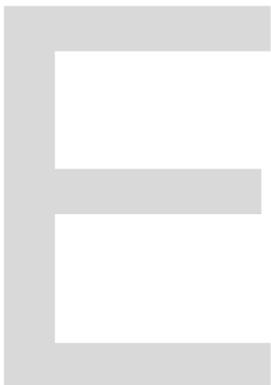
Delegates to the 136<sup>th</sup> Assembly will find attached the text of the communication submitting the request (Annex I), as well as an explanatory memorandum (Annex II) and a draft resolution (Annex III) in support thereof.

The 136<sup>th</sup> Assembly will be required to take a decision on the request of the delegation of the United Kingdom on Sunday, 2 April 2017.

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.



#IPU136

**COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL BY THE CHAIR  
OF THE BRITISH GROUP OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

24 March 2017

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

In accordance with Rule 11.1 of the Rules of the Assembly, the UK delegation wishes to request the inclusion of an emergency item in the agenda of the 136<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly which will be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, from 1 to 5 April 2017 entitled:

"The support of parliaments for global action to address  
unprecedented famine affecting millions of people".

Please find attached an explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution in support of this request.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Nigel EVANS, MP  
Chair of the British Group of the  
Inter-Parliamentary Union

## THE SUPPORT OF PARLIAMENTS FOR GLOBAL ACTION TO ADDRESS UNPRECEDENTED FAMINE AFFECTING MILLIONS OF PEOPLE

### *Explanatory memorandum submitted by the delegation of the United Kingdom*

This proposed draft resolution aims to highlight the concerns of the IPU membership at the severe humanitarian crisis facing a number of regions of the world which share the common characteristic of being afflicted by famine caused by violent conflict. This unprecedented situation has been highlighted in recent statements at the United Nations. Through the resolution, IPU members will urge immediate and concerted global action to address this famine crisis affecting millions and highlight some central issues, including that access to food is a fundamental human right and should never be used as a weapon of war. It also references relevant IPU bodies and calls for them to remain seized of the matters addressed in the resolution.

### **Background**

On 10 March 2017, following visits to countries facing the impacts of famine or at serious risk of famine<sup>\*</sup>, the UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien, made a statement to the UN Security Council. In this statement, he issued a dire warning that the world faces the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations in 1945 with more than 20 million people in four countries, Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria (in the northeast of the country), facing starvation and famine.

Mr. O'Brien said that without collective and coordinated international effort, "people will simply starve to death" and "many more will suffer and die from disease". Reiterating dire concerns expressed by UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres on 22 February, Mr. O'Brien, a former member of the UK House of Commons, urged the immediate contribution of significant international aid to address the dire famine conditions creating immense suffering for population centres and remote regions of the affected countries. He also called for safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid workers "to avert a catastrophe", adding that \$4.4 billion would be needed by July 2017 to adequately address this famine crisis threatening unprecedented suffering for millions of people.

This resolution highlights the urgency of the international community helping millions of affected people across a wide geographical area. Calling for action to address this ongoing humanitarian crisis at the 136<sup>th</sup> Assembly would also be consistent with past IPU undertakings (particularly through the Hanoi Declaration of 2015) to hold all governments to account for their international commitments, particularly relating to the Sustainable Development Goals (also known as the "Global Goals") adopted at the United Nations by world leaders in September 2016. To this end, Global Goal Two seeks to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. This is complementary to Global Goal Six which aims to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water to substantially reduce the number of people suffering water scarcity, including resulting from drought and other climatic disasters.

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\* (The UN and food organisations define famine as when more than 30 per cent of children under age 5 suffer from acute malnutrition and mortality rates are two or more deaths per 10,000 people every day, among other criteria.)

**THE SUPPORT OF PARLIAMENTS FOR GLOBAL ACTION TO ADDRESS  
UNPRECEDENTED FAMINE AFFECTING MILLIONS OF PEOPLE**

***Draft resolution submitted by the delegation of the UNITED KINGDOM***

The 136<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

- (1) *Recalling* the call for concerted global action issued during a report to the UN Security Council by the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien, on 10 March 2017 after visiting countries facing famine or at risk of famine, which followed an earlier call for urgent action by the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres on 22 February 2017,
- (2) *Acknowledging with pride* that both these most senior of UN officials were previously legislators in the United Kingdom and Portugal, respectively, and gratified to see former parliamentarians playing such centrally important roles in the multilateral system,
- (3) *Deeply alarmed* that the Under-Secretary General observed that from the start of 2017 the international community "are facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations" and that more than 20 million people in the affected countries face starvation and famine, fully recognising that the disastrous impacts of violent conflict in creating famine should be a matter for global concern, not just for those countries directly affected,
- (4) *Greatly concerned* by the UN's assessment that resilience of communities is rapidly wilting away and development gains are being reversed with many people be displaced and on the move to search for survival which will create ever more instability and potential for violent conflict across entire regions of one of the most vulnerable parts of our world,
- (5) *Prompted to action* by the UN's observation that, "without collective and coordinated global efforts, people will simply starve to death" and the expectation that many more will suffer and die from disease with no hope for productive lives in the future,
- (6) *Mindful* of the commitments made by leaders of all UN member states in September 2016 to advance the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, including in particular Global Goal 2 on zero hunger which aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture and Global Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation,
- (7) *Obligated* by the IPU's own commitments in the Hanoi Declaration to advance the Global Goals by 2030 to ensure parliaments hold governments to account in turning words into action in implementing effective measures to achieve such goals,
- (8) *Concerned* by the failure of a number of major donor countries to appropriately respond to such clear and unequivocal calls for urgent assistance from those in knowledgeable positions to accurately assess the risks and impacts,
- (9) *Recognizing* that it is only through concerted international action that this potentially unprecedented famine and the looming humanitarian catastrophe can be averted,
  1. *Calls for* immediate action by the international community in support of the appropriate global humanitarian bodies to take immediate steps to address the current famine crisis affecting regions of the world afflicted by conflict, including through ensuring adequate human and financial resources are dedicated to this effort;
  2. *Undertakes* to take effective longer-term steps to tackle the precipitating factors of famine, consistent with the commitment made to achieving Global Goal 2 to achieve zero hunger and the complementary Global Goal 6 to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all people, including addressing the serious impacts of drought and other climatic disasters on vulnerable communities;

3. *Acknowledges* that such efforts should focus on preserving pre-existing lines of food and water supply for communities but, at times of conflict, the highest priority must be given to urgently restore normal, regular and reliable access to adequate sustenance for all affected communities;
4. *Underscores* that, with sufficient and timely financial support from the international community, humanitarian actors can be effective in working to prevent worst-case famine scenarios, recognizing that to do so aid workers must have safe, full and unimpeded access to people in dire need of their assistance;
5. *Resolves* that all parties to conflict must respect the fundamental tenets of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the international community, national leaders and any external supporters must exert appropriate influence and control in cases where IHL is at risk of being disregarded during violent conflict situations;
6. *Asserts* that those people in positions of government authority who refuse the path of peaceful resolution should bear the full responsibility for the suffering of the many people who face famine, hunger and deprivation as a result of violent conflict, and that the international community should hold them to account for their actions if they commit human rights violations by preventing access to adequate food and water;
7. *Welcomes* the important work undertaken by the IPU through both the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs and the Committee to Promote Respect for IHL and requests they both remain seized of the key issues being raised to help prevent future famine crises resulting from violent conflict situations;
8. *Reaffirms* that, beyond this call for immediate global action to address the current famine crisis affecting millions of people, the IPU's members remain totally committed to the fundamental principle that access to food and water should be a basic human right and famine must never be used as a weapon of war.