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+41 22 919 41 50
+41 22 919 41 60
postbox@ipu.org

Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva – Switzerland
www.ipu.org

Regional workshop on Engaging national parliaments in the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1540

Concept note

Security Council Resolution 1540 of 2004 commits governments to implement effective laws and regulations to prevent access to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) by terrorist groups and other non-State actors. As the legislative branch of government that is also responsible for oversight and budget allocations, parliaments have a key role to play in supporting the implementation of the resolution in its many provisions. Yet, in most countries there remains little awareness among parliamentarians of the security risks associated with WMDs. As a result, effective national legislative and regulatory frameworks are lacking in one respect or another.

As the world organization of parliaments, the IPU is looking to work closely with the United Nations in the implementation of Resolution 1540. Several IPU resolutions underscore the role of parliament in ensuring implementation of Resolution 1540.¹ In turn, the UN Security Council has identified significant legislative gaps in terms of effective implementation of UNSC 1540.

The ways in which the IPU can promote the implementation of Resolution 1540 through national parliaments consist of three main modalities:

- Raising awareness of the resolution among parliamentarians;
- Facilitating exchange of best legislative and regulatory practices;
- Providing technical assistance to strengthen the legislative and oversight capacities of parliaments at a later stage

An effective response to the threat of WMDs hinges on a delicate interplay of technical and political factors. Progress on this issue can only be measured in small steps achieved over a relatively long period of time. To engage parliaments on this issue and achieve tangible results, the regional approach is likely to be most effective as a first step.

¹ *Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the contribution of parliaments*, Geneva, 20 March **2014** (in particular OP 11); *Cooperation between Parliaments and the UN in promoting world peace, particularly from the perspectives of the fights against terrorism*, Geneva, 18 October **2006** (in particular OP 15); Resolution on *The role of parliaments in strengthening multilateral regimes for non-proliferation or weapons and for disarmament, in the light of new security challenges*, Geneva, 1 October **2004** (in particular PP 9 and OP 26).

Indeed, the spread of WMDs and related materials can best be stemmed at the regional level where countries often come together to discuss shared security concerns. Cross border circulation of WMDs materials is more likely to take place within a region first (by land or sea). In addition, lessons learned at the national level are more likely to be transferred and take root within the same region where countries often share similar legal traditions and political cultures.

Regional workshops are therefore the best way to evaluate the risk of WMDs in a region, facilitate knowledge transfer, and engage MPs in cross-border informal networks or individual relationships. These workshops would be very practical in nature and look at examples of legislation and regulation from countries within the region to examine both strengths and weaknesses. From there, the workshops would aim to identify ways and means to strengthen security measures in the region.

Resolution 1540 recognizes the threat posed by the acquisition of WMDs by non-State actors, including terrorists. The current state of play in Africa and a careful geo-strategic look at the region shows that WMDs are most likely spread where fights and terrorists actions are taking place, i.e. the northern half of the continent. The neighbouring Arab region is also targeted. Sharing the experience of these countries, and identifying their strengths and weaknesses in limiting WMDs movements could help the whole region to stop the spread of illicit weapons and WMDs all over the continent.

As a first step on this road, and taking into account limited resources, the IPU proposes to hold a regional workshop for the African region. Parliaments from the neighbouring Arab region would be welcome to share their experience and encourage cross border networks.

The workshop would aim to enhance awareness among MPs from the region. The expected result is a clearer sense in countries in the region of the risks they share and of the measures they need to undertake to protect themselves and others against WMDs.

At the same time, the workshop can also help to identify the technical assistance needs that may exist in specific parliaments (to be addressed as separate activities).