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131st IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 12 - 16.10.2014

Assembly
Item 2

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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 Zambia

On 10 October 2014, the Secretary General of the IPU received from the Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia, a request for the inclusion in the agenda of the 131st Assembly of an emergency item entitled:

“The role of the IPU and national parliaments in enacting laws
that shape policies for effective response and preparedness
for Ebola and other infectious disease outbreaks”.

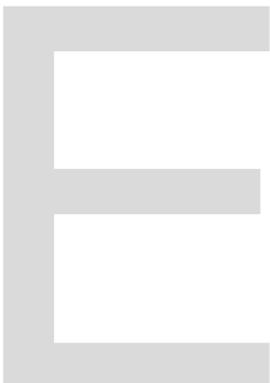
Delegates to the 131st Assembly will find attached the text of the communication submitting the request ([Annex I](#)), as well as an explanatory memorandum ([Annex II](#)) and a draft resolution ([Annex III](#)) in support thereof.

The 131st Assembly will be required to take a decision on the request of the delegation of Zambia 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 ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL
BY THE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA**

Lusaka, 10 October 2014

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

In accordance with Assembly Rule 11.1, the delegation of the National Assembly of Zambia wishes to request the inclusion in the agenda of the 131st IPU Assembly of an emergency item entitled:

“The role of the IPU and national parliaments in enacting laws
that shape policies for effective response and preparedness
for Ebola and other infectious disease outbreaks”.

We are deeply concerned by the fact that the current Ebola outbreak in West Africa constitutes an escalating health emergency of international concern and is becoming a humanitarian disaster with far-reaching economic, political and security consequences for the region and beyond. I append the explanatory memorandum and the draft resolution.

Please accept, Mr. Secretary General, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Patrick MATIBINI
Speaker
National Assembly of Zambia

THE ROLE OF THE IPU AND NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS IN ENACTING LAWS THAT SHAPE POLICIES FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS FOR EBOLA AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAKS

Explanatory memorandum submitted by the delegation of Zambia

The delegation of Zambia requests the inclusion of an emergency item on the agenda of the 131st IPU Assembly entitled *The role of the IPU and national parliaments in enacting laws that shape policies for effective response and preparedness for Ebola and other infectious disease outbreaks*, for the reasons outlined below.

The past nine months have witnessed an unprecedented outbreak of Ebola in five countries in West Africa (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Senegal and Nigeria), and cases are now being reported in North America (United States of America) and Europe (Spain); there have also been cases involving a different strain of the disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 18 September 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported a total of 5,335 cases with 2,622 deaths in West Africa, and 71 reported cases with 40 deaths in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The dead include many health workers, and the number of cases outnumbers the combined number from all known previous outbreaks. The rate at which the virus is spreading continues to increase, with national and international responses struggling to keep up. There are well-founded concerns that the outbreak could kill thousands more before it can be brought under control. Uncertainty as to its further development is so great that estimates of the full impact on the subregion, the African continent and beyond remain approximate at best.

On 8 August 2014, WHO formally designated the Ebola outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, calling into play the application of measures on disease prevention, surveillance, control and response by the 194 Member States. On 18 September 2014, the United Nations Security Council convened an emergency meeting to address the Ebola epidemic – only the second time in history that it has met to address a public health crisis (the first was in January 2000 in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic). The Security Council declared the Ebola outbreak in West Africa a threat to international peace and security and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the deployment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER). The mission's headquarters are in Accra, Ghana, and its terms of reference include stopping the outbreak, treating the infected, ensuring essential services, preserving stability and preventing further outbreaks.

The impact of Ebola exacerbates the plight of poverty-stricken communities. High-risk areas continue to be afflicted by disruptions of essential services, food insecurity and loss of livelihoods. The health systems of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone have been totally overwhelmed and are unable to treat any non-Ebola patients. The Ebola outbreak has also had an adverse impact on the well-being of residents in the areas concerned, affecting the agriculture and financial sectors, small businesses and employment, sparking price increases for certain food and sanitary items and weakening the fiscal position of governments, as tax revenues fall but spending on transportation and health care, inter alia, rises. The disruption of international air traffic, the closing of borders by some neighbouring countries and the travel restrictions imposed on the citizens of the countries affected do nothing to brighten the economic outlook.

Since the outbreak of the disease, the governments of the countries concerned have put in place disease control measures that include the temporary closure of schools and other educational facilities. This has had a direct adverse impact on attainment of Millennium Development Goal 2. The world of sports has also been affected, with revenues from sports activities falling as gatherings of people are stopped or restricted. These restrictions have had a negative impact on households and communities, and affected their cultural practices.

The Ebola outbreak has also had a secondary impact, with health care becoming harder to obtain, psychosocial needs arising from multiple deaths in single families and/or communities, and border closures and other restrictions on movements affecting markets, especially for food.

Although the international security indices of the countries concerned have remained stable, several disruptions of public order have been reported, with security forces being called into action to restore order. These countries remain politically stable for the time being, but the full potential political impact of the outbreak has yet to be felt.

Other countries in West Africa, the rest of the continent and around the world have had to review not only their national Ebola preparedness, spending more on systems and structures able to rapidly detect and contain possible outbreaks, but also their laws, regulations and policies governing infectious disease control and management.

It is in the light of the above that the Zambian delegation finds it necessary to table the current Ebola crisis as an emergency agenda item for discussion by the 131st IPU Assembly, so that the IPU can contribute to effective multisectoral national and international policies and regulations on the Ebola response and preparedness and, through them, help control outbreaks of other infectious diseases.

**THE ROLE OF THE IPU AND NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS IN ENACTING LAWS THAT SHAPE
POLICIES FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS FOR EBOLA AND OTHER
INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAKS**

Draft resolution submitted by the delegation of ZAMBIA

The 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

- (1) *Expressing concern* at the unprecedented Ebola outbreak that has affected West Africa in the past months and *alarmed* at the numerous deaths that have resulted,
- (2) *Deeply moved* by the unfolding humanitarian crisis, especially the deaths of multiple members of the same family and in the most vulnerable groups, such as health-care workers and women,
- (3) *Convinced* of the need to put an end to the crisis and to prevent further outbreaks,
- (4) *Recalling* that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa has been designated a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization (WHO) and declared a threat to international peace and security by the United Nations Security Council,
- (5) *Also recalling* that, on 19 August 2014, the African Union Peace and Security Council invoked Article 6(f) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, relating to humanitarian action and disaster management, and authorized the immediate deployment of ASEOWA (African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa),
- (6) *Further recalling* that, on 18 September 2014, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 69/1 approving the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) to stop the outbreak, treat the infected, ensure essential services, preserve stability and prevent further outbreaks,
- (7) *Concerned* by the delayed international multisectoral response, which continues to lag behind the outbreak, and the high risk that the virus will spread to other countries,
- (8) *Also concerned* by the negative impact that the Ebola outbreak is having on health systems, national and regional economies, national, regional and global security, and the political situation of the countries concerned in the African region,
- (9) *Noting* the WHO advisory opinion on the negative consequences of the Ebola response, namely the isolation and stigmatization of the countries and region affected, and on the need for all countries, especially neighbouring States, to keep their borders open to goods and people, maintain air routes, strengthen national regional preparedness, increase the exchange of information and strengthen their health systems,
- (10) *Also noting* that many countries have already increased their funding and material support for the countries affected in West Africa, and deployed their citizens on the ground to help contain the outbreak,
- (11) *Concerned* that many countries continue to have poorly funded and weak health systems that hamstring national and international efforts to respond to outbreaks of infectious disease,
- (12) *Extremely concerned* that most countries have outdated or inadequate laws and regulations to guide the national and international response in public health emergencies resulting from outbreaks of infectious disease,

(13) *Aware* that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa may, according to the United Nations, become a humanitarian disaster with immeasurable consequences,

1. *Expresses support* for the governments and populations concerned in West Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have been severely affected by the Ebola outbreak;
2. *Vigorously condemns* the stigmatization of the countries concerned and their citizens, as this may exacerbate their humanitarian plight and have a negative impact on their economies;
3. *Appeals* to the international community to greatly speed up delivery of the commitments made to ensure an effective response that will stop transmission of the virus and ensure all infected persons are treated;
4. *Demands* that all political parties in the countries concerned work together in unity and harmony to facilitate, without delay, free and safe access for humanitarian organizations and their staff to areas where the population needs them;
5. *Recognizes* that national leadership and ownership of the Ebola response in the countries concerned, in keeping with their right to self-determination under the Charter of the United Nations, remains the guiding principle for international support;
6. *Recommends* that the United Nations, through UNMEER, and WHO continue to lead and coordinate the international response to the Ebola outbreak;
7. *Requests* the international community to take urgent action to improve health systems and emergency preparedness so as to increase the capacity to deal with the serious public health and humanitarian crises that may result from an infectious disease outbreak;
8. *Invites* the private sector, research institutions and philanthropic organizations to invest in research on viable treatment options and vaccines to treat and prevent Ebola;
9. *Calls on* the countries affected, responding countries and the international organizations working on the ground to work together closely and share information so as to enhance coordination and ensure effective control of the current outbreak;
10. *Recommends* that plans be drawn up to help the countries affected recover from the negative effects of the Ebola crisis based on the lessons currently being learnt.