



## International parliamentary conference

### Parliaments, minorities and indigenous peoples: Effective participation in politics

31 October - 3 November 2010

*Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas (Mexico)*

#### CHIAPAS DECLARATION

We are calling for genuine change. We cannot accept that minorities and indigenous peoples are the most vulnerable members of our societies and that they remain excluded from decision-making that affects their lives and the future of our countries.

We affirm that minorities and indigenous peoples have the inalienable right to full and equal membership of our nations. This right has to be translated into public policies that are sensitive to their situation, needs, and aspirations and accompanied by sufficient resources. This requires the effective participation of minorities and indigenous peoples at all levels of government, and in particular in national and regional parliaments. All public policies should be submitted to minorities and indigenous peoples for prior consultation.

We further affirm the responsibility of political parties to promote the effective participation of minorities and indigenous peoples and address their concerns in their party programmes.

We urge every parliament, within the next two years, to:

1. Hold a special debate on the situation of minorities and indigenous peoples in their country; recognize the diversity in society; and adopt a Plan of Action to make the right to equal participation and non-discrimination a reality for minorities and indigenous peoples;
2. Adopt and implement laws to end discrimination and provide for the effective participation of minorities and indigenous peoples in decision-making, including in parliament, while taking care to secure the effective participation of minority and indigenous women. Where such laws already exist, evaluate their effectiveness and make adjustments where necessary;
3. Ensure that the legislative process is transparent and that parliamentary records are made available immediately so that minority/indigenous peoples can monitor the activity of their representatives and in so doing, hold them to account for their actions and omissions.

We call on the IPU to take the lead in collecting data on the representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in parliament, with due regard for privacy concerns and peoples' right to choose their own identity. We also call on the IPU to monitor the implementation of this Declaration, to facilitate networking among parliaments and to convene a follow-up meeting two years from now to discuss progress and set targets for future action.

As parliaments elaborate their Plans of Action, we recommend that, at a minimum, they:

1. Ensure that the right to free, prior and informed consent is observed in every step leading to the adoption of legislative and administrative measures affecting minorities and indigenous peoples; hold government to account for the implementation of such measures;
2. Require of government that all submissions to parliament of draft legislation and the national budget include an assessment of their impact on minorities and indigenous peoples;
3. Make regular use of plenary sessions in parliament and other parliamentary forums to discuss minority/indigenous matters in order to raise awareness and combat prejudice in society; organize awareness-raising sessions for all parliamentarians so as to increase their knowledge of minorities and indigenous peoples and the particular problems they face; ensure that minority and indigenous issues are mainstreamed into parliamentary work, in particular at the committee level;
4. Allocate sufficient resources to establishing dialogue between minority/indigenous peoples and public institutions and to parliamentary committees on minority and indigenous issues so as to allow them to carry out effective outreach activities such as public hearings with minority and indigenous peoples;
5. Increase parliaments' familiarity with work being done within the United Nations system so as to equip them to better hold governments to account for their international commitments, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; more particularly, urge ratification of ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the implementation of the UN Declarations on the rights of minorities (1992) and indigenous peoples (2007); hold debates in parliament on the conclusions and recommendations made by the UN human rights treaty bodies and special mechanisms with regard to minority and indigenous peoples' rights.

*Adopted by consensus by the participants in the International parliamentary conference on 'Parliaments, minorities and indigenous peoples: Effective participation in politics', Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas (Mexico), 3 November 2010*

*The conference was organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Mexican Congress of the Union and the Government of the State of Chiapas, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; the United Nations Independent Expert on minority issues; and the Minority Rights Group International.*