



142nd IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 16–20 April 2020

Draft Declaration on Parliamentary Diplomacy

We, the Member Parliaments of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Recalling that the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) was founded in 1889 on the virtues of parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue as effective means of securing peace, development and democracy,

Recalling also fundamental principles of international law, including the sovereign equality of all States, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and the fulfillment in good faith of international commitments,

Aware that we live in an interdependent world and face a wide array of transnational challenges, which no single State can solve alone, in the areas of peace and security, democracy, human rights, health, migration, climate change and sustainable development,

Conscious of the key role of parliaments and of the IPU in helping build the political will and forge the commitment to tackle the world's many challenges,

Convinced that parliamentary diplomacy helps build bridges between countries and significantly contributes to strengthening political, economic, social and cultural relations among peoples, while preserving national specificities,

Recalling the vision for international cooperation set out in numerous IPU resolutions and the declarations of the World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments,

Recalling also the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU,

Underlining the international dimension of democracy, as set out in the 1997 Universal Declaration on Democracy,

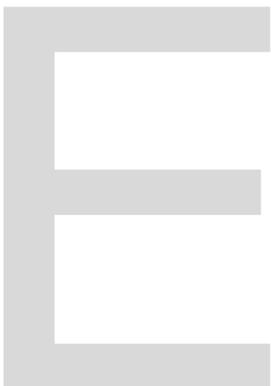
Welcoming a diversification of forms and mechanisms for inter-parliamentary cooperation that usher in new ways of deliberating on regional and global issues,

Welcoming also the International Day of Democracy (15 September) and the International Day of Parliamentarism (30 June) as annual opportunities to pursue the dialogue on the international role of parliaments,

Adopt the following Declaration on Parliamentary Diplomacy and urge parliaments and governments throughout the world to be guided by its content:

I. Enhancing political dialogue and parliamentary diplomacy

1. Parliaments are founded on the value of dialogue between different perspectives. By building an environment of confidence and mutual respect, political dialogue makes a vital contribution to enhancing understanding and finding solutions. Parliaments are therefore exceptionally well placed to promote and practise political dialogue internationally, as well as nationally.
2. By supporting political dialogue and mediation, parliamentary diplomacy plays a constructive and effective role in conflict prevention and crisis management, and contributes to reducing tensions and finding solutions to political problems within and between States.



3. Parliaments regularly address sensitive issues, such as cases before the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. This dialogue is an expression of inter-parliamentary solidarity and can help resolve difficult political situations, while making sure that parliamentarians can exercise their responsibilities safely and effectively.
4. Effective parliamentary diplomacy requires strong parliaments that have the autonomy and capacity to act, including in international affairs.
5. Parliaments should therefore continue to build their capacity and play an active role in international affairs, including by raising awareness among parliamentarians, establishing the appropriate parliamentary bodies to coordinate and liaise between inter-parliamentary activities and national parliamentary work, and ensuring they have sufficient skilled staff to support parliamentarians in their work.
6. An appropriate balance between national, regional and international parliamentary activities must be preserved, guided by a constant focus on the needs of citizens.
7. A key element of parliamentarism is that parliamentarians represent their voters, and as such it is important to ensure citizens' right to express their political choice and beliefs and determine their own political future.
8. Given that citizens' interests are directly or indirectly impacted by a range of transnational issues, parliaments are frequently required to engage in inter-parliamentary cooperation in order to take effective action on these issues.
9. Parliaments themselves need to strengthen their efforts to be representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective institutions, and to be inclusive of the views of all groups in society, including those of women, young people and the most marginalized.

II. Inter-parliamentary cooperation

10. Inter-parliamentary cooperation at the international, regional and sub-regional levels is a key form of parliamentary diplomacy. The exchange of views and experiences among parliamentarians from different countries fosters mutual understanding and solutions to problems of common concern.
11. It is fundamental that parliamentarians, as representatives of the people, be able to engage in inter-parliamentary dialogue with their peers around the world without obstacle or hindrance. States and other authorities must refrain from sanctions, embargoes and other restrictive measures against members of parliament, which limit and impede their ability to engage in parliamentary diplomacy and thus contribute effectively to the parliamentary dimension of international governance.
12. At the global level, the IPU provides a preeminent platform for dialogue and cooperation among parliaments. The IPU brings together almost all of the world's national parliaments and functions as a de facto parliamentary counterpart to the United Nations. Since the founding of the IPU in 1889, parliamentarians have interacted on a myriad of issues; this interaction has often been a catalyst for solutions to political problems.
13. Regional and sub-regional inter-parliamentary bodies serve a wide range of important functions. Regional and sub-regional parliaments are increasingly taking on a legislative and oversight role because of the need to work across borders to find common solutions.
14. Bilateral cooperation between parliaments at both political and operational levels, such as parliamentary friendship groups, provides important opportunities for exchanging views and experiences, and contributes to better communication and understanding between parliaments and States.

15. Parliaments should make the best possible use of global and regional inter-parliamentary organizations and, through them, seek to influence the corresponding inter-governmental bodies.
16. Parliaments should ensure that information about the work of the inter-parliamentary organizations in which they participate is widely disseminated and is incorporated seamlessly into the work of the national parliament.
17. There is a need to facilitate coherence in inter-parliamentary cooperation, thereby enhancing policy alignment, making the best possible use of parliamentary resources and avoiding duplication. As the global organization of national parliaments, the IPU is well placed to help harmonize this cooperation.
18. The digital era offers multiple opportunities for new forms of exchange and cooperation. Parliaments and inter-parliamentary bodies should explore all avenues for enhancing dialogue and sharing good practices.

III. Parliamentary involvement in international affairs

19. Parliaments scrutinize and contribute to governments' foreign policy, just as in all domains of government action. There is a general understanding that foreign policy cannot be the exclusive reserve of the executive, and that parliaments should engage in and contribute to debates on global issues and processes. While parliamentary diplomacy does not aim to substitute for the action of the executive branch of government, it provides a complementary channel in which different voices can be heard and the political will to tackle difficult issues can be forged.
20. Parliaments have a central role in ensuring that States' international commitments are translated into national realities, by revising the legislative framework, overseeing the actions of the executive and allocating financial resources. Accordingly, parliaments must play an active role during the formulation of international commitments that they will later be called upon to implement, in the interest of the people the parliamentarians have been elected to represent.
21. Parliaments contribute to international affairs by, inter alia, holding consultations with governments before negotiations take place, debating agreements proposed and progress achieved, providing parliamentary guidance and recommendations, and ratifying and implementing final outcomes.
22. Parliaments reaffirm the vision for people-centred sustainable development to eradicate poverty in all its forms and eliminate inequalities. This requires conditions for peace and security, in full observance of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.
23. It is essential that parliaments receive adequate and timely information about the government's negotiating positions in regional and global forums, such as the United Nations.
24. Parliaments should scrutinize the implementation of international agreements, contribute to national reports to international monitoring mechanisms and follow up on their recommendations.

IV. Parliaments and global governance

25. The 1997 Universal Declaration on Democracy notably highlights that "democracy must also be recognized as an international principle, applicable to international organizations and to States in their international relations". Parliaments should take the lead in ensuring that this principle is put into practice.
26. The United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU should pursue their efforts to work together closely and further strengthen their strategic partnership, thereby reinforcing multilateralism.
27. The activities of the United Nations system at national level should systematically include engagement with the national parliament.