

Seminar for Parliaments of the Pacific on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540

Concept note

United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 of 2004 is an important tool in the global non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) architecture. Adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the resolution imposes binding obligations on all States and commits governments to implement effective laws and regulations to prevent access to WMDs by non-State actors. As part of the binding obligations, the Security Council called upon all States to present a first report on steps they had taken or intended to take to implement this resolution. However, a small group of Member States has not yet submitted their initial report. States were also encouraged to prepare, on a voluntary basis, national implementation action plans mapping out their priorities and activities when implementing the key provisions of the resolution, and to submit those plans to the 1540 Committee.

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 UNSC resolution 1540. Several IPU resolutions underscore the role of parliament in ensuring implementation of UNSC resolution 1540¹. In turn, the UN Security Council acknowledged in resolution 2325 (2016), that parliamentarians have a key role in enacting the necessary legislation to implement the obligations set out in the resolution. The IPU can promote the implementation of UNSC resolution 1540 through national parliaments by way of the following main modalities:

- Raising awareness of the resolution among parliamentarians and encouraging an exchange of experiences among them;
- Facilitating the exchange of good legislative and regulatory practices;
- Providing technical assistance to strengthen the legislative, oversight and representative capacities of parliaments;
- Providing parliaments with tools to enhance parliamentary contribution.

After a successful activity targeting African countries in 2016, the IPU, in partnership with the Security Council 1540 Committee and with the support of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), would like to organize a second event on the topic for parliaments in the Pacific. No region is free from threats in today's world. Pacific Island Countries, whose development is based on the tourism industry, are thus especially vulnerable to external influences such as natural disasters. The proliferation of WMDs could also have a strong impact on tourism as would the use of chemical, bacteriological or nuclear weapons or related material. The issue of strategic trade is also to be addressed. Trade of commodities initially to be used in legitimate civilian applications could also, because of dual-use characteristics, facilitate the design, development and production of WMDs and their delivery systems.

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).

In addition, the level of implementation of non-proliferation of WMDs legislation in the Pacific countries varies greatly from one to another. On the one hand, Micronesia has adopted legislation to implement the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (the Chemical Weapons Convention or CWC) whereas, on the other hand, the Solomon Islands, have not yet submitted their first report on the implementation of UNSC resolution 1540 (2004).

An effective response to the threat of WMDs hinges on a delicate interplay of technical and political factors. To engage parliaments on this issue and achieve tangible results, the regional approach is likely to be most effective, as a first step, to evaluate the risk of WMDs in a region, facilitate knowledge transfer, and engage MPs in cross-border informal networks or individual relationships. Such a workshop would be very practical in nature. It would look at examples of laws and regulation from countries in the region and examine both their strengths and weaknesses. The aim would be to identify ways and means to strengthen security measures in the region.

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 WMD-related materials is more likely to take place first within a region (by land or sea). In addition, lessons learnt 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. The regional seminar for Parliaments of the Pacific could then present trade management strategies aimed at protecting a nation's security, trade relations, and international reputation. The aim of the seminar will also be to establish confidence-building measures for facilitating trade, economic growth, and development.