



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

138th IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 24 – 28.03.2018

Standing Committee on Democracy
and Human Rights

C-III/138/4-Inf.1
8 March 2018

Consideration of proposal for a debate on *The role of parliaments in ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and ensuring respect for the human rights of LGBTI persons*

Tuesday 27 March 2018 (4.30 p.m. - 6.30 p.m.)

Background note

At the 137th Assembly¹ held in St. Petersburg (Russian Federation), the Standing Committee considered a proposal by Belgium to hold a panel discussion at the 138th Assembly entitled *The role of parliaments in ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and ensuring respect for the human rights of LGBTI persons*, which would not lead to a resolution.

The proposal was discussed by the Committee Bureau. Various views were expressed, with a majority of Bureau members supporting the proposal. At its sitting on 17 October, the proposal was presented to the Standing Committee. The representative of Belgium stated that:

the aim of the proposal is not to "promote" homosexuality or non-binary gender diversity but to look at this issue from a human rights point of view. LGBTI persons are human beings and as such are entitled to the full enjoyment of their basic human rights as enshrined in national and international law. It is necessary to address all forms of violence and discrimination that are incompatible with their enjoyment of these rights. Because of the sensitivity of the issue, it is not proposed to reach for an IPU resolution with specific recommendations at this stage. However, it is suggested that, following the example of the United Nations Human Rights Council,² the IPU should at least be prepared to discuss the issue.

A dozen delegations from five Geopolitical Groups addressed the matter, with no delegation expressing any opposition.³ The proposal was approved unanimously. According to the IPU Rules, the Standing Committees establish their own work plans and set their agendas. The Assembly is informed of the work programmes of the Standing Committees, and takes note of the Reports presented by the Presidents of the Standing Committees.

As part of her Report, the President of the Standing Committee informed the Assembly of this decision at its last sitting on 18 October. Several delegations expressed reservations and objections on the proposed subject for a panel discussion. In the light of the opposing views on the matter, the President of the Assembly referred the proposal back to the Committee for further consideration.

¹ Results of the 137th IPU Assembly, October 2017, <http://archive.ipu.org/conf-e/137/results.pdf>.

² *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity*, April 2017, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/35/36

³ *Summary Records of the Proceedings of the 137th IPU Assembly*, pp. 75-75, <http://archive.ipu.org/conf-e/137/sr.pdf>.

IPU Presidents on various occasions have drawn attention to the fact that, as parliamentarians and representatives of the people, they were called upon to examine and discuss all important matters, irrespective of how difficult or complex they were. In St. Petersburg, President Chowdhury underscored that all discussions should be carried out in an atmosphere of understanding and mutual respect, in the service of the dignity of all human beings, and that hate speech was not to be tolerated under any circumstances.

At the 138th Assembly, the Committee is therefore called upon to give further consideration to the proposal for a debate. The Belgian delegation, which made the original proposal in October 2017, will be invited to present their proposal. Following this, the IPU Members will be invited to indicate whether they support the proposal or not, and may, if they wish, provide a short explanation of their position. The Committee will then decide how to proceed on this matter.