



## Inter-Parliamentary Union

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### PROMOTING AND PRACTISING GOOD GOVERNANCE AS A MEANS OF ADVANCING PEACE AND SECURITY: DRAWING LESSONS FROM RECENT EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Resolution adopted by consensus\* by the 126th IPU Assembly  
(Kampala, 5 April 2012)

The 126th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Considering that there is compelling evidence to support the positive correlation between good governance and the level of peace and security in society and the world,

Reaffirming the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, which are the indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world, and reiterating our determination to foster strict respect for them (paragraph 2, 2005 World Summit Outcome, A/RES/60/1),

Supporting all efforts to uphold the sovereign equality of all States and respect their territorial integrity and political independence; refrain in international relations from threatening or using force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations; settle disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law; respect the right to self-determination of peoples remaining under colonial domination and foreign occupation; uphold non-interference in the internal affairs of States; ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; guarantee respect for the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion; seek international cooperation when solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character; and meet in good faith the obligations assumed in accordance with the Charter (paragraph 5, 2005 World Summit Outcome, A/RES/60/1),

Recognizing that good governance is the manner of governing that aims to achieve sustainable economic, social and institutional development, while promoting a healthy balance between the State, civil society and the market economy, and that there is no way of exercising it other than by serving the interests of the people,

Mindful that the role of public authorities in creating an environment for entrepreneurs to function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of the relationship between governments and citizens is pivotal in promoting and practising good governance at the national and international levels,

Noting that good governance leads to efficient and accountable institutions, i.e. political, judicial, administrative, economic and corporate rules that promote development and the rule of law, protect human rights and ensure that people are free to participate and be heard in decisions that affect their lives,

Also noting that the catalysts for the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa were several and included the concentration of wealth in the hands of autocrats in power for decades, a lack of transparency in the redistribution of that wealth, corruption and, in particular, young people's refusal to accept the status quo, while spiralling food prices and famine were also determining factors,

Acknowledging that the disconnect between the demands of civil society and the response of governments, as well as a lack of government reform, might well have contributed to the protests,

Expressing its sorrow for the victims of the political processes in the Middle East and North Africa, and its solidarity with the families of those who died in their quest for freedom and justice,

Noting the undeniably positive influence of education and exposure to issues of good governance;

Recalling the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which, inter alia, provide that every citizen,

regardless of gender, religion or race, has a right to take part in the conduct of public affairs directly or through freely chosen representatives, and that the will of the people should be expressed through free and fair elections based on universal and equal suffrage and secret ballots, in the full exercise of the sovereignty of the people, so as to constitute the basis for the legitimate and credible authority of government,

Also recalling the resolution on Providing a sound legislative framework aimed at preventing electoral violence, improving election monitoring and ensuring the smooth transition of power, adopted by the 124th IPU Assembly (Panama City, 2011), which calls upon parliaments, where necessary, "to undertake constitutional and legislative reform, building on international obligations and commitments and taking into account local realities, so as to provide a sound legal framework for free and fair elections that includes the adoption of electoral systems that provide for representative and inclusive outcomes, and for the smooth transfer of power"

Further recalling the above-mentioned IPU resolution, which urges parliaments "to conduct such electoral reform through a comprehensive, inclusive and open debate that fosters the broadest possible involvement of all stakeholders, authorities, political parties, media and civil society organizations in the electoral process",

Noting that the recent events in the Middle East and North Africa have provided all countries with important lessons on democracy and freedom,

Also noting that those events have shown that people everywhere need democratic and legitimate governments based on the will of the people, expressed regularly through free and fair elections,

Further noting that it is always the people who have the right to determine their own political future based on the cultural and historical characteristics of their nation,

Reaffirming that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives and that, while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy and it does not belong to any country or region;

Also reaffirming the need for due respect for sovereignty and the right of self-determination (paragraph 135, 2005 World Summit Outcome, A/RES/60/1),

Mindful that people will not view democracy in a positive light if their livelihood is at stake and that democracy and development are inextricably linked,

Acknowledging that the experiences of other regions and of the past year tend to show that the process of democratization in the Middle East and North Africa will take a significant amount of time, given that it is often a lengthy, unpredictable and complex process, which involves changing power relations in society,

Convinced that the attainment of democracy requires extensive changes that are rooted in constitutions, electoral systems, laws and regulations related to political parties, the media, the justice system, an enabling environment for civil society and, not least, a change in attitudes, including a paradigm shift regarding the place of women in political life,

Also convinced that commitment to the principles of good governance in the management of public affairs will guarantee freedoms and the rule of law, reduce corruption, ensure fair elections, help establish systems and institutions that strive to provide the best services to all sectors of society, and be the best guarantor of political stability,

1. Invites all States and parliaments to consider the major lessons drawn from the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and the United States, as well as elsewhere in the world, on the need for democratic reform and for governments to provide their people with basic employment and economic opportunities, meet their citizens' demands and guarantee equal opportunities for all;
2. Recommends sustained investment in political reform where necessary, possibly to include the creation of independent government watchdogs, the amendment of constitutions, electoral systems, the judicial system, laws, regulations and processes related to political parties and the taking of measures to ensure the functioning of the media, the achievement of gender equality and the involvement of civil society;
3. Also recommends that particular attention be paid to security sector reform so that the police, intelligence services and armed forces act within the rule of law, fully respect the fundamental rights of citizens and are held to account for their acts to a democratically elected authority;

4. Expresses its wish, with a view to building inclusive societies, that transitional justice and the need to address the past are adequately taken into account in the transition process, in particular through the promotion of the truth, the sentencing of perpetrators, the compensation of victims and the establishment of safeguards to avoid repeating mistakes of the past;
5. Calls upon all Member Parliaments that have not done so to ratify and ensure full implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and see to it that freedom of thought, expression and association, as well as other civil and political rights, are guaranteed;
6. Also calls upon parliaments to ensure the establishment of governance systems that will lead to the improvement of people's livelihoods so as to help restore faith in democratic institutions and democracy;
7. Recommends that leaders in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as elsewhere in the world, strive to implement policies that will help reduce economic inequality and tackle everyday problems, such as corruption, poverty and the lack of access to health services;
8. Encourages IPU Member Parliaments to advocate for increased civic education, with a focus on the fundamental principles of democratic governance, while reflecting the diversity of histories and cultures;
9. Urges the international community to stand ready to help countries at their request and to support the transition process while complying with the principle of sovereignty as enshrined in the UN Charter, in order to avoid undue influence on the situation in States and the outcome of elections;
10. Calls upon the international community to promote comprehensive reform of the United Nations in order to achieve world peace, security and development through respect for the principles enshrined in its Charter as well as the fair representation of nations;
11. Encourages States to comply with the Millennium Declaration, which calls for the promotion of peace, security and human rights and the elimination of hunger and poverty, and stipulates the importance of and right to education in the context of sustainable growth;
12. Invites political parties, national parliaments and governments to implement policies and mechanisms aimed at ensuring the participation of women and youth in public political and economic life;
13. Calls upon all parliaments to enact legislation and take specific action to enhance their transparency, design information and communication technology tools to facilitate citizens' access to relevant information on parliamentary processes, exercise their oversight function over the other branches of the State and establish mechanisms enabling them regularly and vigorously to reach out to civil society and be answerable to it;
14. Urges the IPU to lend support to the democratization process under way in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in areas relating to the process of constitutional reform and the drafting of new electoral laws, as well as the sharing of good practices for open and inclusive electoral processes that are conducive to the establishment of representative and effective parliaments;
15. Also urges the IPU to design and implement a programme of technical assistance and capacity-building that supports the newly elected parliaments in the Middle East and North Africa;
16. Further urges donor countries and the multilateral financial institutions to honour their aid pledges to the Arab Spring countries in order to rescue their economies, protect them from recession and reduce their levels of unemployment;
17. Appeals to the parliaments of the countries where stolen assets have been transferred to urge their governments and banks to recover such assets;
18. Calls for an international parliamentary conference on the role of youth in politics in the contemporary world and current technological developments to be held under the auspices of the IPU.

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\* The delegation of Venezuela expressed its opposition to the resolution because of the approach it took on good governance.