146th IPU Assembly
Manama (11–15 March 2023)

Manama Declaration

Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance

Endorsed by the 146th IPU Assembly (Manama, 15 March 2023)

We, Members of Parliament from around the world, gathered at the 146th IPU Assembly in Manama, Bahrain, are deeply aware of the dangers that hate, intolerance, exclusion and violence in all their forms pose to the very foundations of democracy and to the social contract that holds our societies together.

Consumed by greed and competition, our world is facing social and economic inequalities on an unprecedented scale. Heightened economic insecurity is breaking communities apart and leaving growing numbers of people socially isolated, fending for themselves and often with inadequate access to public service delivery and social safety nets.

Inequality and economic insecurity can give rise to anger and frustration in communities everywhere. The dignity intrinsic to every human being can be undermined by factors such as poverty, the denial of inalienable economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, violations of the rule of law, discrimination against women, lack of inclusion of youth, and the de facto exclusion from politics of the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Xenophobia, racism, intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination and extremist narratives are all expressions of this deep malaise in our societies. They manifest themselves in hate speech or outright violence in various forms against migrants, people with disabilities, and national, ethnic, religious, linguistic or other marginalized groups perceived as a threat to the established order. They can also be expressed in the desecration of religious sites and symbols, actions which are deeply offensive to people of faith. We, however, recognize the diversity within our communities as a source of enrichment, and we reaffirm the fundamental rights and freedoms of all people, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Regrettably, some in positions of influence in society seek to exploit the vulnerabilities of others, sowing hatred and division as a way to advance their own interests. Digital platforms designed to facilitate social interaction and communication are being misused to micro-target, amplify and spread disinformation and ill intent against others. The ease with which some of these voices speak in total disregard of the truth carries profound dangers for democracy. Most worryingly, their words can be a direct cause of violence and intolerance within communities and between nations.

We can respond to these challenges by encouraging collaborative networks promoting dialogue and joint projects in service to the community, by creating channels for conflict prevention and mediation, by promoting moderation, by advancing education and awareness building, and by encouraging community and religious leaders to contribute to these objectives. We commit to speaking out against intolerance and especially any advocacy of hatred that constitutes discrimination, hostility or violence. We will also assist in the resolution of conflict through the exercise of parliamentary diplomacy.

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With all this in mind, we consider it our unique responsibility, as parliamentarians, to speak and act responsibly towards all people, particularly those who disagree with us, and in ways that bring people together peacefully in pursuit of the common good. We affirm that societies that are inclusive and just, and in which rights are upheld, are more likely to be cohesive, peaceful and democratic. We pledge to fight inequality through rights-based economic and social policies that put people before profit and the weak before the strong, and that uphold the equality and dignity of every person. We reaffirm the urgent need to implement the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 – leaving no one behind – as our best hope for peace, democracy and sustainable development for all.

More concretely, we are committed to utilizing our law-making, representative and oversight functions towards the following objectives:

- Make hate-motivated acts and all forms of violence linked to religion, belief, xenophobia, racism, or intolerance of marginalized groups an offence under the law.
- Invest in education for all and at all levels, including peace education and "education for democracy", pursuant to the United Nations General Assembly resolutions by this name.
- Make parliamentary proceedings consistently open to the input of relevant civil society organizations and community groups representative of the diversity of society.
- Engage in constructive, respectful dialogue with parliamentarians of all political persuasions, both nationally and internationally.
- Ensure that national statistical institutes and research bodies produce up-to-date disaggregated data to assist with the formulation of inclusive economic and social policies.
- Perform self-assessments of the inclusivity of our parliaments and take active measures to increase the representation in our parliaments of women and youth, as well as of underrepresented national, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other marginalized and vulnerable communities.
- Uphold the rights of migrants, refugees and stateless people, as particularly vulnerable groups, consistent with international conventions.
- Regulate digital platforms and other media to diminish the risk of hate speech and various forms of disinformation while protecting the fundamental right of free speech as a bulwark of democracy.
- Protect cultural sites as expressions of our common heritage, as well as holy sites, places of worship and religious symbols as expressions of different religions and beliefs.
- Promote interaction with relevant UN organizations working for interfaith and intercultural dialogue, and support UN peacekeeping and mediation efforts.

We pledge to take this Declaration forward through concrete actions and in accordance with the core values of the IPU as outlined in its current Strategy.