



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

137th IPU Assembly

St. Petersburg, Russian Federation
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Sharing our diversity: The 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy

*Resolution adopted unanimously by the 137th IPU Assembly
(St. Petersburg, 18 October 2017)*

The 137th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Acknowledging the significance of the IPU's 1997 Universal Declaration on Democracy and *taking note of* the world parliamentary community's extensive use of the Declaration,

Reaffirming the IPU's Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections adopted in 1994 which confirms that in any State the authority of the government can derive only from the will of the people as expressed in genuine, free and fair elections,

Reiterating that democracy, human rights and the rule of law constitute universal, interdependent and mutually reinforcing ideals,

Taking into account the following United Nations instruments – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on Human Rights (1993),

Reaffirming the core elements set out in the Universal Declaration on Democracy, in particular the existence of representative institutions at all levels, and, notably, a parliament in which all components of society are represented and which has effective legislative and oversight powers, equal partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society, an independent judiciary, the holding of free and fair elections at regular intervals on the basis of universal, equal and secret suffrage, the right to organise political parties, the right to freedom of expression and assembly, including through electronic means of communication, active civil society, open and free media, and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, minorities and vulnerable or marginalized groups of people,

Referring to existing IPU resolutions, including those on human rights (2004), civil society (2005), universal democratic and electoral standards (2007); freedom of expression and the right to information (2009), youth participation in the democratic process (2010), citizen engagement in democracy (2013), democracy in the digital era (2015), women's political participation (2016), the threat posed by terrorism to democracy and human rights (2016), as well as the IPU's Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments (2012),

Noting that democracy is both an ideal to be pursued and a mode of government, as stated in the Universal Declaration on Democracy, to be applied according to the modalities which reflect the diversity of experiences and cultural and political particularities, without derogating from internationally recognised principles, norms and standards,

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Also noting the close relationship between democracy and sustainable development, and drawing attention to the importance of democratic governance for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as enshrined in the outcome document of the United Nations Summit on the Post-2015 Development Agenda entitled *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*,

Confirming the central role of parliaments in democracy, and the need for representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective institutions at all levels,

Wishing to foster active citizen engagement in the democratic process and in the activities of governments at all levels, including among young people, and committed to achieving gender equality in political decision-making,

Underscoring the vital importance of a strong, pluralistic and freely operating civil society in keeping governments accountable, as well as of access to independent, credible and reliable information, and *reiterating* that freedom of expression is a cornerstone of democracy that permits the free flow of ideas,

Noting the new opportunities for democratic participation offered by digital media, as well as the challenges they can present, and *underscoring* the need to safeguard and promote fundamental rights, such as the right to personal safety and integrity, the right to privacy and the right to determine the disclosure and use of one's own personal data,

Also noting that peace, security and development are major enablers of democracy, and *expressing deep concern* about violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms, which aim to eliminate democracy, human rights and basic freedoms and which constitute a threat to peace and security,

Recognizing the importance of democratic principles in international relations and the important role of international and regional organizations in upholding these principles,

Expressing support for the 2007 UN General Assembly resolution 62/7 to designate 15 September as the International Day of Democracy,

1. *Reaffirms* that democracy is a universal value that does not belong to any country or region and that, as a system of government, democracy contributes to the fulfillment of human potential, the eradication of poverty, the development of open and peaceful societies and the improvement of relations among nations;
2. *Reiterates* that building a democratic society requires respect for international law and for the principles of the rule of law, human rights, respect for diversity and the equitable inclusion of all citizens, gender equality, and the protection of persons with disabilities, migrant workers and members of their family, national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities as well as vulnerable or marginalized groups of peoples;
3. *Reaffirms* the role and the importance of the opposition as a key component of democracy, which criticizes and scrutinizes the government and the parliamentary majority, and represents political alternatives and the interests of the sections of the population in the political minority;
4. *Calls on* parliaments and all public institutions to take action and continually work to attain and uphold the principles and values established in the Universal Declaration on Democracy;
5. *Reaffirms* the importance of the separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, *underscores* the importance of securing the independence of parliaments and the judiciary through the constitution and legislation, and *urges* parliaments to enhance their capacity to oversee the policies, administration and expenditure of the executive as part of a system of checks and balances;

6. *Calls on* parliaments to strengthen citizen engagement and public participation in the democratic process, and *encourages* parliaments to continue to improve their working methods to facilitate the participation of civil society and ordinary citizens in their deliberations;
7. *Urges* parliaments and governments to accelerate their efforts to achieve equality between men and women in decision-making processes at all levels of national, regional and international institutions, to ensure equality in all areas of life, including by introducing affirmative action in policies, legislation and gender-responsive budgeting, to provide for gender equality in the law and in practice, and to ensure gender-responsive democratic processes that duly include women's participation and perspectives;
8. *Calls on* parliaments and political parties to adopt measures to enhance active involvement and participation of youth in the electoral process and in parliament's business, as well as youth representation at all levels of national, regional and international institutions, including in parliament;
9. *Also calls on* parliaments to ensure that legislation is in place that fully guarantees and protects freedom of expression so that politicians, journalists, human rights defenders and other ordinary citizens can speak publicly on matters of concern without fear of reprisals, to denounce any such reprisals and to do everything in their power to ensure the protection of persons at risk and the punishment of those responsible for such acts;
10. *Urges* parliaments and governments to take legislative and institutional steps to ensure the progressive achievement and consolidation of democratic goals, including through the establishment of an independent and impartial mechanism for the management of elections;
11. *Calls on* parliaments to condemn and reject the removal of an elected government through unconstitutional means;
12. *Encourages* parliaments, governments, and political parties, journalists and civil society to denounce all forms of speech, including online, which degrades others, promotes hatred and encourages violence against any group; to promote respect for diversity and pluralism in public discourse; to build partnerships with technology companies and adopt all adequate legislative measures in order to prevent and eliminate hate speech, cyber harassment, bullying and violence, in particular against women and girls;
13. *Launches* an urgent appeal to parliaments to promote equal access for everyone to the Internet and new technologies, and the inclusion of civic education in the school curriculum, including education for democracy, human rights, inclusion and respect for diversity, gender equality, freedom of religion and sustainable development;
14. *Calls on* parliaments to enhance their contribution to achieving the SDGs, and to hold governments to account for progress in meeting development targets, in the spirit of leaving no-one behind;
15. *Urges* respect for democratic principles in inter-State relations as well as in international organizations, and *underlines* its conviction that principles of democracy must be applied to the international management of issues of common concern to humankind, in particular the human environment;
16. *Calls on* the IPU to continue to support efforts of parliaments to strengthen democracy and ensure good governance;
17. *Also calls on* IPU Member Parliaments to renew their efforts to implement the provisions of all IPU resolutions related to democracy, as well as the IPU Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments and *requests* the IPU to monitor and regularly report on progress as part of its overall strategy to promote democracy;
18. *Invites* the United Nations to examine the possibility of designating 30 June as the International Day of Parliamentarism in commemoration of the creation of the IPU on 30 June 1889.