



# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Second Committee of the General Assembly

Agenda item 56 (a): Implementation of the second United Nations Decade  
for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)

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United Nations  
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Chairperson,

The IPU welcomes the Second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017), precisely because we agree that poverty eradication must remain the principal concern of the development work of governments and international organizations alike. We also support the recommendation of the Secretary-General for an overall action theme for the Decade “that would convey a sense of urgency” when it comes to poverty eradication.

It is precisely in that spirit of urgency that the IPU 118<sup>th</sup> Assembly that took place in Cape Town, South Africa, last April was dedicated to the theme of “*Pushing back the frontiers of poverty*”. Hundreds of members of parliament from both developed and developing countries met over a few days to share their experience as well as their views on how to rid the world of this scourge. A striking feature of this debate is how much agreement there was on the essential points, such as the view that poverty eradication should not be seen as charity but as an act of human solidarity and a commitment between parties, that emergency aid should not substitute for long-term planning, that governments have a responsibility to protect and provide, which cannot be delegated to market mechanisms, and that when it comes to poverty eradication and in fact the whole spectrum of the MDGs, a special focus should be placed on Africa.

Our Members have looked at poverty in all its manifestations, both economic and social: it is not only dire poverty that they worry about - the famous one billion people who are now 1.4 billion according to a recent reassessment by the World Bank; they are also concerned about relative poverty, that is the distance – ever increasing – between the haves and the have-nots. Indeed, inequality both within and amongst countries is growing, in spite of increasing affluence in the world. That should make us all pause for a moment and ask the question: how can we seriously tackle absolute poverty in an environment of growing inequality? Clearly, we need policies that will work against both.

Another broad consideration that emerged from our assembly has to do with the connection between peace and poverty. Many of our members have drawn attention to the fact that some of the poorest countries today are either at war or have been impacted by conflict. There is no better predictor of a country’s path out of poverty than whether or not it has enjoyed lasting peace. We should also not forget that military expenditures are at an all time

high. So an important way to combat poverty is to invest more in peace building as well as, by extension, to invest in democracy.

When it comes to the specific policy measures that our members have identified as priority, they come for the most part under the rubric of human resources in the broadest sense of the term. Members of parliament overwhelmingly share the view that employment creation is key to poverty eradication. To achieve that, more education and training, as well as a vast array of social services like health care, unemployment insurance and retirements programmes, are needed. Investing in people also means paying due attention to groups that have long been marginalized, such as people with disabilities, who because of discrimination and exclusion are at greater risk of poverty. More efforts should also go to support the empowerment of women and overcoming gender inequality across the board.

Underlying all this, and regardless of the specific policy recommendations that may apply to each country, what came out strongly from our debate in Cape Town is the need for national development plans to be vetted by parliaments before they are adopted. While some parliaments have reported progress in the way the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and other such plans were submitted to parliament for review, many found that the process continues to leave much to be desired. So we must really must emphasize once again the need for poverty eradication strategies to be fully owned by the countries concerned by involving their parliaments more directly and in full respect of their constitutional prerogatives.

Chairperson,

In addition to helping mobilize political will, the IPU also conducts its own institutional work to help mobilize the resources for poverty eradication. Recent examples of this include our work in support of the new Development Cooperation Forum of the ECOSOC, for which we helped organize in cooperation with UN-DESA a Stakeholders Forum in Rome this past June. The results of that debate helped inform the first DCF that met here in July.

Over the years the IPU has been supportive of the Monterrey Consensus and has adopted a number of resolutions on topics that include ODA, debt, and trade. We attach tremendous importance to the International Review Conference that will take place in Doha in a few weeks' time. The IPU will

be present in Doha with a parliamentary message on financing for development that has just been adopted by our members at the 119<sup>th</sup> Assembly this month in Geneva. We will also hold a parliamentary hearing at the Doha conference to build awareness of the next stage in the FFD process and of the critical issues that still remain to be addressed.

Needless to say, the current global financial crisis is adding a new dimension and a sense of urgency to all these efforts. In response to the crisis, our members have very recently adopted a resolution which focuses on the need for more regulation and surveillance of financial flows around the world. In particular, our member parliaments have pledged their support for “a new rules-based financial system that could help to achieve a more just and transparent economic structure which in turn could also help to achieve peace and stability.”

Moreover, following the collapse of the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, the IPU will continue to work through its Parliamentary Conference on the WTO to help build support for a fair deal that would greatly expand trade opportunities for developing countries and so provide them with an additional flow of domestic resources for development.

Thank you.