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Rethinking and reframing the approach to peace processes with a view to fostering lasting peace

***Explanatory memorandum submitted by the co-Rapporteurs
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1. There are 56 ongoing conflicts worldwide – the highest number in the post-Second World War period. Even if the vast majority of these conflicts take place within States, they often have international impacts. In addition, nearly half of all conflicts between 1989 and 2018 have shown signs of recurrence, with almost one fifth of the conflicts recurring three or more times.¹ Also, the dividing line between war and peace is increasingly obsolete with often more violence occurring in States “at peace” than those “at war”.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated existing conflicts and governmental challenges with speakers at a recent United Nations Security Council session arguing that the “COVID-19 pandemic has reversed peacebuilding gains and enabled intolerance and extremism to take hold”.² Sadly, evidence seems to indicate a worsening of this trend in the future. The risks of conflict are expected to escalate because of, for example, climate change and the major transitions required to address it. Armed conflicts often result from a combination of a society’s grievances and capacity for organized violence. Once conflicts start the cost to societies are enormous.
3. While the need for a sustainable approach to peace is arguably greater than ever, current approaches to building peace seem unfit to meet tomorrow’s challenges. Indeed, these approaches remain outdated and ineffective. The ways in which contemporary peace processes are conceived and structured fail to engage all relevant actors of society, especially women, and to produce local ownership of the peacebuilding process. In general, they aim to end violence as soon as possible but do not provide for long-term prospects of sustainable peace. Moreover, people affected by conflicts more often than not struggle to gain genuine ownership of and leadership over peace processes so that the latter reflect the expectations, needs and desires of local people and communities. This absence of legitimacy and contextualization of peace processes explains in part the recurrence of conflicts.
4. In many ways, parliaments are the front lines of peace processes. They are uniquely placed by virtue of their status as a bridge between two separate worlds: on the one hand, the local and grassroots communities, and, on the other hand, national and international authorities and policies. By way of their unique convening power, parliaments are also a crucial venue and vehicle for building sustainable peace as one of their core functions is precisely to foster the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

¹ Julie Jarland and others, “How Should We Understand Patterns of Recurring Conflict?”, *Conflict Trends* (3/2020): <https://www.prio.org/publications/12303>.

² See <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14659.doc.htm>.

5. Hence, parliamentarians can play an essential role in peace processes and can also be instrumental in preventing conflicts. Through their representative function they ensure that the feedback of their constituents is considered by their respective governments. Through their oversight function they ensure accountability in their societies.
6. A growing body of research and case studies of current and past peace processes reveal how women's participation – whether in official negotiations or at the grassroots level – contributes to reaching lasting peace agreements. Better implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 through empowering women in crisis and conflict is vital. Women make up 50 per cent of the world's population and must therefore be part of the solution. Continued failure to include women in peace processes means ignoring their demonstrated contributions and overlooking a potential strategy to respond more effectively to security threats around the world.
7. In preparing the draft resolution, the co-Rapporteurs met with the following organizations, think tanks and experts: the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA); Interpeace; the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre; the Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution (NOREF); the Norwegian Nobel Committee; the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Secretariat; the Principles for Peace; the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Oslo Governance Centre; the UNDP Global Policy Network (GPN); and the UNDP Inclusive Processes and Institutions (IPI) in Bangkok.
8. Colleagues from different regions of the world provided the co-Rapporteurs with inputs for the draft resolution during the hearing held at the 143rd Assembly. Also included in the draft resolution were some of the inputs received from the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians.
9. With all that said above, the co-Rapporteurs constructed the draft resolution around building blocks and listed what parliaments and their members can do concretely to fully play their essential role in peace processes. Starting with setting the global context and situating the role of parliaments in that current global context, the resolution acknowledges the role of parliament in peace processes and provides actionable recommendations for parliaments and parliamentarians on dialogue, the core functions of representation, legislation and oversight, and engagement on prevention.
10. The draft resolution underscores that parliaments and parliamentarians are powerful agents of change. They are crucial to ensuring sustainable peace and development not only as a conflict prevention mechanism but also in post-conflict situations. Being legislative bodies and overseers of governmental action, they are uniquely placed to ensure the fulfilment of peace commitments, including through passing of laws that would alleviate the impacts of conflict and ensure a brighter future by focusing, for example, on the interaction between psychological and social factors to enhance wellbeing. Parliaments can guarantee inclusiveness in decision-making for better legitimacy and work with civil society to oversee peace-related political processes.
11. The draft resolution follows the human security approach which is a proven analytical and planning framework that supports more comprehensive and preventive responses cutting across sectors to develop contextually relevant solutions, and supports partnerships to help realize a world free from fear, violence, want and indignity.
12. The draft resolution is not meant to be an end in itself but rather the start of a process. It presents several concrete actions that parliaments can already undertake to address the multidimensional causes and consequences of conflicts. As such, it calls for focussed parliamentary actions integrated in networks of stakeholders to ensure lasting responses to the most challenging deficits in peace and development.
13. The draft resolution also tasks the IPU to develop an inventory of tools for parliaments and parliamentarians to engage in dialogue, legislation, oversight, and prevention in the pursuit of peace so that parliaments can continue devising new processes and engage better in peace processes. In so doing parliaments will thrive to reverse the current situation and have more successful peace processes than conflicts.
14. This parliamentary initiative is also meant to contribute to other processes that share the same aim of addressing the shortcomings and of guiding decision-making and practices in current peace processes.