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Contribution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on
the Right to Development

Paper submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Inter-Parliamentary Union carried out a number of activities relating to the early implementation of the Right to Development. Various questions dealt with in the Declaration on the Right to Development were considered by the Union's specialized and statutory Conferences held twice a year. The resolutions and concluding documents adopted by those conferences represent a valuable contribution of the world parliamentary community to governmental efforts to reach the objectives set forth in the Declaration.

In December 1986, the Union held, in Harare, a Conference on Agricultural Development and Food Security in Africa, organized in co-operation with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Union of African Parliaments. In November 1987, IPU organized an Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in the Western Hemisphere in Caracas, in co-operation with the United Nations, WHO and the Latin American Parliament. An Inter-Parliamentary Conference on "Health - A Basis for Development in Africa" was held by IPU and WHO in co-operation with the Union of African Parliaments in Brazzaville, in June 1988. These specialized Inter-Parliamentary Conferences adopted a series of concrete recommendations aimed at mobilizing the parliamentary community in various parts of the globe to contribute to the search for solutions to development problems, as well as to ensure the right to development.

The 80th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Sofia (Bulgaria) from 19 to 24 September 1988 undertook an in-depth examination of action by Parliaments in developing international co-operation in the humanitarian field and in bringing national legislation into line with international human rights norms, principles and instruments. The Conference reaffirmed, inter alia, "that the right to development is an inviolable right, the enjoyment of which would further the exercise of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights". In full accord with the United Nations

Declaration on the Right to Development, the Conference called on Parliaments "to undertake constructive efforts jointly at the international level to promote human rights, seek agreement and mutual understanding, improve readiness to co-operate and seek solutions to world problems such as hunger, disease, poverty, homelessness and environmental destruction, and to establish a just and democratic international economic system".

The 81st Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Budapest (Hungary) from 13 to 18 March 1989 examined a whole range of issues concerning the protection of the rights of children, including those relating to development.

In conformity with Articles 7 and 8 of the Declaration on the Right to Development, the 81st Conference stressed that "the right of children can best be advanced and guaranteed through concerted efforts by the whole international community to establish a just international economic order and to settle conflicts and remove hotbeds of tension by means of dialogue and negotiations, so that the precarious situation of children in developing countries may be redressed".

The 82nd Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in London (United Kingdom) from 4 to 9 September 1989 took up the subject entitled "Population and food equation and the search for rational and efficient solutions to the problem of the Third World debt to ensure that the world can eat". Parliamentarians outlined a series of specific measures to bring about more harmonious economic development of the world.

Welcoming the international efforts to end Namibia's colonial status and the occupation of its territory, the London Conference called, in a special resolution, on the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), the European Community, the Commonwealth and all relevant international organizations urgently to co-ordinate a comprehensive response to the development assistance needs of newly independent Namibia in the process of reconstruction and economic and financial independence from South Africa.

The Conference also examined the problem of peaceful uses of outer space for the benefit of mankind. It called, inter alia, on States "to envisage introducing, as necessary, procedures, mechanisms and bodies for international co-operation so as to contribute to the advancement of space science and technology, to the strengthening of international security and confidence, economic and social development, and the prevention and handling of disasters and major threats".

It should be noted that the above-mentioned resolutions of the 80th, 81st and 82nd Conferences have been brought to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, and issued by them as official documents.

In their resolve to contribute to the development of effective international economic co-operation, parliamentarians also took up the problem of tourism whose tremendous economic impact on the modern world has perhaps not been sufficiently recognized to date. The Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Tourism organized by IPU and the World Tourism Organization in April 1989 in The Hague (Netherlands) recommended, among other things, that "Parliaments should ensure that the tourism component is taken into account when other issues of national importance (e.g. economic, regional development and security questions) are studied so that tourism becomes part of comprehensive national policies and priorities for development". The conclusions of this Conference were also issued as an ECOSOC official document (E/1989/77).

In line with Article 8 of the Declaration which stipulates that "effective measures should be undertaken to ensure that women have an active role in the development process", the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been pursuing an extensive programme of studies on the status of women, basically in the political decision-making process. The results of the latest studies can be found in ECOSOC document E/CN.4/1989/NGO/24.

A world-wide Inter-Parliamentary Symposium held in Geneva from 20 to 24 November 1989 undertook a detailed examination of the whole range of issues linked to the participation of women in the political and parliamentary decision-making process.

The Symposium stressed, among other things, that "the contribution of women's specific culture is vital if society is to find satisfactory answers to fundamental problems challenging humankind such as strengthening peace, solving the debt problem and the distribution of wealth, controlling the population explosion and sustainable development which takes account of the environment." It also noted that donor countries should ensure that the implementation of projects they fund in developing countries is to the benefit of women.

The Symposium participants adopted a series of recommendations to ensure the continuation and strengthening the role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to promote the participation of women in political and parliamentary life. It was recommended, in particular, that a Working Group be established in order to plan objectives and programmes for the next decade consistent with the goal of steadily increasing the proportion of women in all Parliaments and international bodies to 50 per cent.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union envisages further activities in the future aimed at contributing to the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development.