Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1476 (2006)[1]

Parliamentary dimension of the United Nations

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its Resolutions 1289 (2002) on parliamentary scrutiny of international institutions and 1373 (2004) on strengthening of the United Nations.

2. Despite wide acknowledgement that the United Nations (UN) should be reformed, reaching an agreement on the nature of this reform is proving to be a difficult and laborious task. Results have been achieved in some areas, such as the decision to set up a peacebuilding commission as well as a human rights council. No agreement has been reached on the general thrust of the reforms, however, while negotiations on some important aspects, such as those relating to the enlarged representativity of the Security Council, seem to have reached a deadlock. At the same time, events such as the war in Iraq and the Oil-for-Food scandal have eroded confidence in the UN multilateral system and the credibility of the organisation.

3. At this crucial moment, the Assembly calls for a renewed impetus in the continuation of the UN reform process. In its view, a durable and forward-looking reform should be led by the objective of rendering the whole United Nations system more transparent, legitimate and accountable before its member states as well as public opinion at large. For this reason, the reform cannot be limited to making the organisation more reflective of current geopolitical realities but should aim at incorporating democratic mechanisms in the UN system, with a view to redressing the democratic deficit in global governance and bring the United Nations closer to the people.

4. In this context, the Assembly believes that the issue of the closer involvement of parliamentarians in UN activities should be brought to the forefront of the current reform discussions as it is a fundamental means to associate the people – through their elected representatives – to the UN deliberative process, the oversight of UN activities and the monitoring of the implementation of UN decisions by member states.

5. Parliamentary involvement in the work of the UN should be enhanced progressively. This process should begin through the setting up within national parliaments of groups of members of parliament to support co-operation with the United Nations, by ensuring that parliamentarians are fully informed of UN activities. The process should culminate with the inclusion in the UN system of a parliamentary assembly with consultative functions.

6. The Assembly takes note of the recommendations put forward in the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations – the so-called Cardoso report – concerning the engagement of parliamentarians in UN work and welcomes the growing association of parliamentarians with UN activities, in the form of strengthened co-operation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

7. This strengthened co-operation is welcome as it improves the familiarity of national parliamentarians with UN activities and provides them with a podium in UN instances. The Assembly, however, believes that in order to have a lasting impact on the legitimacy, accountability and representativity of the United Nations system, the involvement of parliamentarians in UN work should be further developed so as to become

1. Assembly debate on 23 January 2006 (1st Sitting) (see Doc. 10771, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mrs de Zulueta). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 January 2006 (1st Sitting).

systematic and structurally linked with the functioning of UN institutions. In particular, given its deliberative and oversight functions as well as its role as the most representative global forum, the UN General Assembly is ideally placed to act as an interface with parliamentarians.

8. A decisive step towards the development of a UN parliamentary dimension could be the establishment of an experimental parliamentary committee with consultative functions for General Assembly committees. It would be composed of national delegations, elected by national parliaments, with due respect to the principle of representativity of the different political forces present in parliament and with due consideration to gender balance. This parliamentary committee should be of reasonable size and ensure a fair geographical representation of all the regional groupings currently existing in the General Assembly. Within each regional grouping, national delegations would rotate on a periodic basis. Should this experiment be successful, the structure and functioning of this committee could inspire the establishment of a UN parliamentary assembly with consultative functions for the plenary General Assembly.

9. In light of the above, the Assembly urges Council of Europe member and observer states to:

9.1. encourage debates on issues discussed at the UN in national parliaments as well as in regional parliamentary assemblies;

9.2. allow the active participation of parliamentarians in national delegations to the General Assembly.

10. In addition, the Assembly invites the UN Secretary-General to give further consideration to he recommendations of the Cardoso report concerning the engagement of parliamentarians and suggest proposals along the same lines.

11. Finally, the Assembly invites the UN General Assembly to:

11.1. envisage appropriate ways for involving parliamentarians in its activities by: working with the IPU and other inter-parliamentary representative bodies and devising a step-by-step strategy, which could include the following stages:

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11.1.1.1. setting up a network of regional parliamentary assemblies to discuss emerging UN priorities, with consultative functions for one or more General Assembly committees;

11.1.1.2. setting up a parliamentary committee to discuss issues of special global or regional importance and/or the UN budget, with consultative functions for one or more General Assembly committees; setting up a UN parliamentary assembly, based on national delegations, with consultative functions for the General Assembly;

11.1.1.3. setting up, together with the United Nations and its institutions, of national information and research centres for parliamentarians, local government representatives, representatives of NGOs and volunteers in member states;

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11.1.2. adopting clear rules for the involvement of parliamentarians in its work, setting out their rights and responsibilities, as well as the obligation for parliamentary delegations to ensure a fair representation of the political parties or groups in their parliament and give due account to gender balance considerations;

11.1.3. setting up a panel to make precise proposals on the recommended size, composition and rota system of parliamentary committees and/or a UN parliamentary assembly;

11.2. consider additional measures to ensure better interaction between the General Assembly and national or regional parliaments, in particular those encouraging the more active involvement of the Speakers or Presidents of these assemblies in the work of the regional groupings of the General Assembly.