



Inter-Parliamentary Union

Chemin du Pommier 5, C.P. 330, CH-1218 Le Grand-Saconnex/Geneva, Switzerland

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN ENSURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

*Resolution adopted unanimously by the 124th IPU Assembly
(Panama, 20 April 2011)*

The 124th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Noting that:

- a. Following a steady drop in poverty levels between 1990 and 2007, hunger rose sharply in 2009 according to the United Nations, and that 925 million persons will go hungry in 2011 according to the latest estimates of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;
- b. The food crisis of 2007-2008 revealed the international community's vulnerability with regard to food security;
- c. Arable land is being expanded to the detriment of forested areas and fragile ecosystems;
- d. Desertification is being caused in many places by long droughts and poor land use;
- e. The United Nations has indicated that the world has lost 13 million hectares of forest every year for the past 10 years, thereby rendering the environment more vulnerable, without counting the 60,000 km² lost each year to desertification;
- f. Deforestation accounts for 14 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and consequent climatic change;
- g. Many regions in the world, notably the Middle East and North Africa, find themselves in a difficult situation regarding water supply, with the Sahel countries suffering from constant water shortages;
- h. This situation heightens the risk of conflict over access to and the use of water resources;
- i. Many countries, in particular developing countries, are hard hit by collapsing exports, capital flight and rising unemployment;
- j. Over the past decades, agriculture has too often been neglected in both national and international policies, thereby contributing to conflict and instability,

Also noting that:

- a. Governments are obliged by the growing needs of a burgeoning urban population and intensive agriculture - both thirsty for water - to build new dams on rivers and streams and to increase the number of high-speed pumps extracting water from the water table, but are unable to take the measures required to ensure a more sustainable use of water;
- b. Seventy per cent of the fresh water used worldwide is for agricultural production, while competing claims on water for other purposes are increasing;

- c. The quality of fresh water is being lowered due to the intensive use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides in agriculture, industrial effluents from the growing number of industrial units and untreated domestic sewage from a burgeoning population;
- d. For some years now, certain regions have been experiencing an unusual overabundance of water, while others find themselves suffering increasingly from water shortages,

Further noting that:

- a. Population figures have undergone significant change marked by:
 - o lower birth rates and an ageing population in countries of the North;
 - o a high birth rate in Africa, the level of which depends on the country;
 - o exponential urbanization compounded by higher levels of migration to coastal areas; and
 - o more significant migratory flows - forced or voluntary - as a result of armed conflicts or for economic reasons;
- b. According to certain projections, in the next 50 years, the population of almost all developed countries will be smaller and older as a result of lower fertility rates and longer life expectancy;
- c. All countries and regions of the North need immigration to prevent their population from declining, but that the level of immigration, based on past experience, varies greatly owing to the immigration policies adopted by each country;
- d. Africa is experiencing an unprecedented baby boom and its population will be almost 2 billion by 2050;
- e. There are about 200 million migrants in the world today, representing 3 per cent of the global population;
- f. Expatriation of highly educated human resources impoverishes developing countries and causes them to lag further behind in terms of science and technology,

Aware that:

- a. There is a direct link between the use of land, soil, water, biodiversity, other natural resources and food production, on the one hand, and between food production and poverty on the other;
- b. Poverty is more pronounced in rural areas in developing countries, where many farmers are finding it difficult to sustain agricultural production and make a living;
- c. Overcoming hunger requires an increase in both small-scale and large-scale agriculture and effective policies that focus on both categories and are based on sustainable production and environmental protection;
- d. The private sector on the national and international levels has a key role to play in sustainable agriculture and food security, food production, processing and marketing, and in the development and application of new technologies, including eco-efficient and responsible investments;
- e. The allotment of more and more arable and forested land for the production of biofuels compounds the growing imbalance between the supply of and demand for foodstuffs;
- f. The growing demand at the global level for biofuels, compounded by the heightened need for land, may put pressure on marginal lands that are used for subsistence farming by the poor in rural areas;
- g. Sustainable development in rural areas should focus on the construction of social networks, such as cooperatives and knowledge centres, where people can acquire knowledge and qualifications, combine them and hand them down to the next generation,

Mindful that agriculture, food security, population growth and climate change are closely linked,

Considering that management of the world's natural resources (soil, land, forests, wildlife, marine and freshwater products, water, energy and air) has to become more sustainable, focusing on renewal (sustainable use) and conservation instead of depletion and spending, while pursuing the goals of sustainable economic and social development,

Aware that the multiple challenges facing the world in terms of climate change, ecosystem degradation, food insecurity, and the financial and economic crises require an integrated response ensuring that short-term emergencies are addressed while for long-term strategies for sustainable development, i.e. strategies that meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs,

Underscoring the importance of achieving sustainable fisheries in order to prevent overfishing of the world's oceans, thereby safeguarding fragile ecosystems,

Also underscoring that an integrated and sustainable approach has to be adopted for the management of natural resources, agricultural production and demographic change,

Acknowledging that in order to implement an integrated approach, research, education and the proper application of research results are vital, and that traditional and indigenous knowledge needs to be linked with modern technologies and the latest scientific knowledge about sustainable agricultural production, in particular food production and the sustainable use of natural resources, including poverty reduction in rural areas,

Underscoring that the growth of the world population (approx. 9 billion by 2050) will require higher food production, and that increasing water and energy shortages hamper food production, which inter alia drives migration flows,

Also underscoring that growth in the agriculture sector, particularly in food production, remains fundamental for poverty alleviation, economic growth and environmental sustainability,

Highlighting that it is equally crucial to improve agricultural productivity (including water usage, integrated land and water management, and sustainable agricultural intensification - more with less) without expanding areas under cultivation, and to halt environmental degradation (including biodiversity loss and curbing and reversing land degradation and desertification),

Also highlighting that, in order to avoid large-scale migration and the high risks it poses for stability, peace and security in many regions of the world, it is crucial to provide farmers and other people living in rural areas with the conditions, opportunities and resources they need to increase their food production or incomes, send their children to school, and enjoy rising living standards and fulfilling lives,

Considering the need to devise innovative sources of financing with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), supplement official development assistance, guarantee stable flows of funds in the face of long-term needs and facilitate the concerted management of development aid between countries of the North and countries of the South,

Acknowledging that it is critical for countries to share experiences and innovative technologies and cooperate in training and developing human and technical capacities,

Convinced that development policies should focus on providing water-access and transfer systems in and to areas that suffer from water shortage,

Aware that many technologies and much of the knowledge needed are already available, but that their wider dissemination and uptake are key challenges that must be addressed,

Considering that developing countries, with their growing populations and rising living standards, should be at the centre of agricultural and rural revival and that for many of them, halting and reversing land degradation and desertification is a high priority,

Cognizant of the fact that many developing countries need to urgently boost agricultural productivity in a sustainable manner,

Aware that intensifying agriculture for food security must include a vigorous response to major environmental changes such as climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought,

Considering that Africa and Asia, above all, should benefit from a sustainable green revolution, that is, an agricultural productivity revolution that is economically viable, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable,

Also considering that a green revolution, particularly in Africa, should be tailored to the needs of diverse local agro-ecological conditions and cropping systems,

Underscoring the major role of the agricultural sector in feeding a world population of 9 billion in the coming decades,

Also underscoring that the rise in commodity prices affects first and foremost the poorest importers of agricultural products and that the extreme volatility of commodity prices threatens food security,

Further underscoring that a radically different outlook is needed and that agriculture should no longer be seen as a cause of environmental degradation but as part of the solution to improve environmental sustainability,

Aware that agriculture is at the heart of poverty eradication, sustainable development and, increasingly, climate change,

Also aware that achieving gender equality in agriculture and rural labour markets would generate significant gains for agricultural and rural development, food security and society as a whole,

Underscoring that measures to provide an enabling environment for investment in sustainable agriculture and rural development and for tackling the structural causes of food insecurity are needed by both small-scale and large-scale farmers,

Also underscoring that inclusive and secure access to finance, in particular for millions of small-scale farmers, has to be promoted, with due regard for gender equality and the important role of women in agriculture,

Convinced that it is critical to put in place appropriate land tenure systems for private and communal land, so as to promote sustainable agriculture and improve access to land, in particular for small-scale farmers,

Also convinced that the active engagement of all actors, including local government, civil society and private sector partners, should be mobilized in the planning and implementation of policies and practices,

Underscoring the important role efficient food distribution systems and well-functioning markets, at the national, regional and international levels, can play in ensuring global food security and promoting sustainable development,

Also underscoring that it is important to generate opportunities for higher incomes by adding value to the production and supply chain,

Acknowledging that the private sector must play a central role in expanding agriculture through production, building agricultural value chains and assessing the potential of new technologies,

Considering that, in order to promote sustainability, cisgenetic modifications are preferable to transgenetic ones,

Acknowledging that investment in revitalizing developing country agriculture and promoting sustainable rural development will need to be supported by new and additional resources from all quarters,

including private, public, domestic and international sources,

Aware that while the increase in large-scale land acquisitions in developing nations by foreign investors might bring opportunities to local people, including guaranteed outlets, employment, investment in infrastructure, and higher agricultural productivity, local people might also lose access to land, water, and other resources, particularly if they are not included in the land allocation decision-making process and their land rights are not protected,

Underscoring that an enabling environment is needed to support investments and domestic, regional and international partnerships, North-South and South-South partnerships, and public-private partnerships among relevant stakeholders,

Convinced that it is crucial that women be given the same access as men to land, technology, financial services, education and markets,

Also convinced that parliamentarians and their constituencies worldwide, together with governments, private stakeholders, and national and international agencies, have a role to play in heightening awareness of the close relationship between climate change, food security and agriculture,

Considering that land for agriculture and other natural resources should be exploited in a sustainable manner,

Also considering that the green revolution can only succeed if it goes hand in hand with a comprehensive and coherent set of political decisions, including financial incentives for small-scale farmers, communication and education policies and land management reform,

Noting the MDGs, the related Action Plan and the commitments contained therein concerning the fight against poverty and hunger,

Aware of the importance of fisheries for food security, including as a source of income,

Knowing that forests are very important for many people's livelihoods and employment, including sustainable forestry management,

1. *Invites* the IPU, parliamentarians and parliaments to act as agents of change in identifying an integrated and sustainable approach to the management of natural resources, agricultural production and demographic change;
2. *Encourages* parliamentarians and parliaments to engage all actors, including local and regional governments, civil society and private sector partners, in the planning and implementation of policies;
3. *Calls upon* parliamentarians to acknowledge the crucial role of women in sustainable agricultural development by adopting legislation and supporting policies and measures aimed inter alia at eliminating discrimination against women and at increasing women's access to agricultural resources, education and training, family planning and maternity health services, labour markets, technologies, micro credits, finance and other facilities, since women's empowerment is key to poverty eradication and sustainable development;
4. *Urges* parliamentarians to ensure that discussions about land use and land acquisition remain on the national and international political agendas;
5. *Encourages* parliamentarians to help draw up or propose plans for regional development and land use that are predicated on the imperative need to save agricultural land;
6. *Calls upon* national parliaments and parliamentarians to encourage their governments to take all necessary measures to restore degraded land;
7. *Invites* parliamentarians to support policies and measures at the national, regional and international levels in order to improve water efficiency in agriculture and promote integrated

- land and water management and the development of innovative water efficiency technologies;
8. *Calls upon* parliaments and parliamentarians to develop and harmonize legislation for strict and adequate standards on the manufacture and use of fertilizers, pesticides and biotechnology products;
 9. *Urges* parliaments and parliamentarians to initiate or strengthen legislative mechanisms for sustainable forest management and prohibit any form of exploitation that does not conform to terms of reference that impose reforestation and the reconstitution of forested areas;
 10. *Calls upon* parliamentarians to include, as part of their action, measures aimed at halting biodiversity loss and promoting plant and animal genetic diversity;
 11. *Invites* parliamentarians to give broad backing to the premise that a transition to sustainable agriculture should be part of the sustainable development solution;
 12. *Calls upon* parliamentarians, in particular those in developing countries, to support and encourage rural development policies;
 13. *Encourages* parliamentarians in developed countries to call for transparent decision-making processes, including the setting of clear targets for stepped up official development assistance for agriculture;
 14. *Calls upon* parliamentarians to support sustainable growth strategies incorporating policies on agricultural development, food production, rural development and the sustainable use of natural resources;
 15. *Urges* parliamentarians and governments to create the requisite conditions and provide opportunities and resources for the most vulnerable farmers to have access to land, increase their food production, participate in knowledge-sharing, have access to education and enjoy rising living standards;
 16. *Also urges* parliamentarians to support initiatives aimed at enhancing the way global agricultural commodity markets function, in particular by making these markets more transparent, regulating the corresponding derivatives markets, strengthening the coordination of national and regional agricultural policies and establishing new international mechanisms to support developing country importers;
 17. *Encourages* governments and parliaments to advocate environmental awareness and educate the public about food waste-reduction measures and coordinated action against environmental degradation;
 18. *Calls upon* parliamentarians, in close cooperation with national, regional and international scientific institutions and agricultural organizations, to organize conferences, seminars and workshops to discuss, develop and support action to improve the sustainable development of agriculture, in particular food production, the sustainable use of natural resources and demographic development;
 19. *Invites* the IPU to consider annual reports on global developments in these fields at IPU Assemblies.

Note: you can [download a complete electronic version](#) of the brochure "Results of the 124th Assembly and related meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union" in PDF format (file size approximately 746 Kb). This version requires [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#), which you can download free of charge.

