



Statement of the International Secretariat of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO) on the Devastating Consequences of several Conflicts, the Role of Religions, and the Position of Europe

The International Secretariat of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO), during its meeting held from 17 to 21 April at the Parliament of Georgia in Tbilisi, focused on the flagrant violations of international law, marked by the predominance of the doctrine of power, as well as on the increasing number of armed conflicts taking place in the current period, resulting in immense loss of human lives, a surge in refugee flows, and incalculable material destruction.

We are deeply concerned about the escalation in the broader Middle East region, which has led to thousands of deaths, millions of displaced persons, a serious risk of a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe, the destruction of critical infrastructure, as well as severe repercussions for the global economy—effects that disproportionately impact the most economically vulnerable citizens worldwide.

Furthermore, we are deeply troubled by the continuation of the war in Ukraine into its fifth year following the Russian invasion in 2022, and by the failure to achieve a peaceful settlement of disputes, despite the hundreds of thousands of victims, the extensive destruction of infrastructure, and the displacement of millions.

The systematic violation of the rules of international law and the option to military force as a means of resolving disputes—actions unequivocally condemned under the Charter of the United Nations—must serve as a higher awareness to every institution and citizen. The drift of the international system toward an anarchic framework of relations, where the interests or ambitions of the stronger prevail, would constitute an unforgivable historical regression for humanity—one that must be prevented.

Beyond the above, the IAO, as an interparliamentary institution dedicated to highlighting Orthodox values in public life, declares its unequivocal opposition to any attempt to exploit religion or religious ideas as a pretext for imposing unlawful faits accomplis contrary to international law, as well as for the perpetration of terrorist acts.

Religions are fundamental contributors to the shaping of each society's value system. We strongly support the dynamic of an emerging alliance of multireligious and multi-stakeholder

actors, as envisaged and promoted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), including parliamentarians who mobilize resources to address today's global crises.

To this end, religions themselves must, in accordance with their traditional role, place the human person at the center of their attention and reinforce a humanistic understanding of reality, opening pathways of hope and creativity for contemporary humanity.

We maintain that just as religious values should promote peace, reconciliation, and respect for others, so too politics—as technically feasible—must foster and consolidate a climate of dialogue and collaboration, prioritizing the instruments of diplomacy in resolving interstate disputes.

For a transformation of the global paradigm, we believe that the role of Europe must be strengthened; however, this requires a transformation grounded primarily in its cultural roots.

Undoubtedly, in the aftermath of the Second World War, Europe has demonstrated a remarkable creative flourishing, achieving unparalleled intellectual and cultural accomplishments. It has elevated political culture and democracy as defining elements of citizens' lives, through the initiatives of international organizations and institutions, particularly in safeguarding fundamental freedoms and human rights.

At the same time, Europe has been at the forefront of initiatives for disarmament, the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons, environmental protection, the promotion of green development, the protection of citizens from toxic waste, the preservation of biodiversity, and many other critical areas essential to the advancement and well-being of societies.

Moreover, a culture of tolerance has been firmly established, along with a sustained effort to eradicate racial hatred, uphold the right to difference, and highlight the value of otherness. International collaboration among political actors has brought forth an understanding of democracy not merely as a legal system, but as a living process of dialogue among free and equal citizens.

Today, however, these achievements appear to be at risk amid the turmoil of wars that claim thousands of innocent lives and consume vast natural and economic resources. The Western world seems to be entering a “post-democratic” phase, in which crises are both generated and managed by a small circle of powerful leaders and technocrats, while technocratic decision-making increasingly replaces democratic legitimacy, detached from public discourse and democratic consensus. Decisions taken behind closed doors, without the voice of citizens, undermine the very foundations upon which Europe was built and endanger democracy itself.

All this occurs at a time when it is evident that, especially in moments of crisis, democracy must guide our choices. Without it, Europe risks losing not only its legitimacy, but also its very essence. The institutional bodies of our societies are called upon to provide the necessary answers to the causes of these multi-layered crises and to respond to the peoples' demand for

a new social contract that will regulate relations among citizens—relations founded not solely on market rules, but primarily on a commonly accepted ethical basis.

We firmly stand in defense of democratic legitimacy at all levels of contemporary societies. In an era in which technocratic governance and demagogic simplifications threaten democratic life itself, reasoned discourse and public dialogue, grounded in mutual respect, constitute the only promising foundation for democratic freedom. Today, as democracies across the world are tested by vast inequalities, fake news, “technicians of power,” and polarization—facing new forms of authoritarianism, oligarchic dominance, injustice, and inequality that fuel distrust toward institutions—the safeguarding of democratic achievements remains the only relevant and urgent proposition.

Thus, we call upon parliamentary bodies worldwide to contribute to the strengthening of the “public sphere” (Habermas) as the space where citizens, as free and equal subjects, engage in discussion, express disagreement, and critically shape public opinion. When this sphere recedes—under the pressure of markets, technocracy, or media manipulation—the functioning of democracy falls under the control of closed centers of power. We are therefore called upon to defend it as a constant of public discourse and as the essential condition for citizens to deliberate freely and collectively form their will. We are called to deepen democratic participation and to ensure that Europe becomes not merely a union of states, but a true community of citizens. We are also called to restore and refine the sense and meaning of political responsibility, which in our time has been weakened and diminished.

Finally, the IAO addresses a message of Peace to all Humanity, and to the people of Georgia during these joyful days of Easter.

Christ is Risen!