



AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY UNION

APU

R.140/39/16

PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH, IN PROMOTING DEMOCRACY

*Resolution adopted by the 39th Conference
(Rabat, 9 November 2016)*

The African Parliamentary Union, meeting at its 39th Conference in Rabat (Morocco) on 8 and 9 November 2016,

Reaffirming its commitment to democracy, and *convinced* that promoting and strengthening it can contribute to building peace, stability and economic and social progress in African countries,

Recalling the commitment by States, as stated in the Millennium Declaration, that they would spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and *encouraged* by the fact that participation by the youth in political life features among the priority actions of democracy worldwide,

Bearing in mind its resolutions on “Promoting Democracy and the Rule of Law to ensure Peace and Development in African Countries”, adopted by the 38th Conference held on 6 December 2015 in Bissau, and “The Strengthening of Democratic Governance in African Countries as a necessity for Political, Economic and Social Stability” adopted by the 35th Conference held in Kigali, on 30 November 2012, and the resolution on “Youth Participation in the Democratic Process” adopted on 1 April 2010 by the 122nd IPU Assembly in Bangkok,

Considering that per the terms of the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council in September 1997, “democracy is founded on the right of everyone to take part in the management of public affairs; it therefore requires the existence of institutions at all levels and, in particular a Parliament in which all components of society are represented and which has the requisite powers and means to express the will of the people by legislating and overseeing government action”,

Welcoming the decision by the 26th Conference of the African Union to place the year 2017 under the theme “Investing in the Youth as a Demographic Dividend”, and *Taking note* of the final document of the general discussion on the theme: “Rejuvenating democracy: Giving voice to youth”, at the 134th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held on 23 March 2016 in Lusaka,

Considering that the participation of the youth in decision-making processes is a way of promoting the active exercise of citizenship and arousing civic commitment in them, teaching them the functioning of institutions and enhancing their sense of social responsibility,

Aware that the feeling of abandonment and exclusion could be a source of social frustration and lead to lack of civism and rejection of all authority of the State, radicalization and disenchantment toward democratic systems and institutions,

Aware that popular uprisings throughout the world, mainly led by young people, have affirmed the need for democratic governance, anchored on inclusion, participation, non-discrimination and empowerment,

Concerned by the downward trend of election participation rates, over time, the disenchantment of many citizens, particularly young people, with traditional political processes, and *Observing* on the other hand, that young people are increasingly involved in democracy movements all over the world,

Deploring the poor level of democratic culture in popular circles and *underlining* the importance of formal education and informal learning in training the youth in democratic citizenship,

Aware of the fact that promoting and strengthening democracy, by increasing the participation of young people in decision-making could be a means for dealing with the rise in extremism,

1. *Believes* that the role played by parliament in promoting democracy is highly important, in that it represents all facets of society and has the powers to express the willingness of the people by legislating and controlling government action;

2. *Invites* African States to provide their parliaments with the human and material resources needed, in their efforts to promote democracy, and *Commits* African parliaments, in modernizing and rejuvenating their parliaments, to enhance their legislative and control powers and their checks and balances, to further democracy and the rule of law;

3. *Requests* African countries to devise and implement civic educational programmes designed to entrench democracy in societal values, and to this end, *Calls upon* them to encourage and support the efforts deployed by national non-governmental organizations, trades unions, the media or any other competent body in training, production of teaching aids or extension work;

4. *Calls upon*, following the example of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, African political leaders to strengthen the links between the sustainable development goals and the aspirations of the citizens, who are calling for greater transparency, accountability and a more inclusive decision-making process;

5. *Urges* African parliaments to ensure that the voice of the people, particularly that of young people, is taken into account when countries set their priorities, goals and indicators and tie them to the sustainable development goals.

6. Also urges African parliaments and parliamentarians to take all the measures needed to ensure an enabling environment for participation by the youth and galvanize their leadership, and avoid political, economic and social marginalization, which give way to extremism and violence;

7. *Reaffirms* the need for African parliaments, in their structures and functioning, to adapt themselves to the digital environment to improve transparency and accountability, and also take into account the fact that modern information technologies such as the internet, mobile telephone networks and social media are changing the ways in which citizens, especially the youth, are engaged;

8. *Calls upon* parliaments to create the legal framework and mechanisms that respect social diversity and which include measures to support associations, dialogue structures and means of communication, to enable broad civil society participation in promoting democracy;

9. *Calls upon* parliaments to support comprehensive youth policies, especially for the poor and marginalized, that promote health and employment, match education to market requirements, and foster access to loans for young entrepreneurs, taking all aspects of youth development into account;

10. *Urges* African parliaments to take the appropriate legal measures to increase representation of the youth in parliaments and other decision-making bodies, by instituting quotas in relation to the proportion of eligible young people, by alleviating restrictions on the legal age for election, and by strengthening political party support, entrusting the youth with leadership positions and making them models to be followed by their peers. Special attention should also be paid to the situation and needs of young women;

11. *Requests* African parliaments to open parliamentary debates to young people, through consultations and parliamentary hearings, and by forging links with youth parliaments and national and municipal councils and similar bodies, student associations and youth NGOs, so as to foster inclusive dialogue for peace and tolerance;

12. *Urges* African parliaments to draw up and adopt strategies designed to mobilize the youth as agents of transformation, and foster economic empowerment among them, civil commitment and increased participation in decision-making at the local and national levels, in politics and in public institutions, and in strengthening resilience;

13. *Calls upon* African parliaments to support projects designed to encourage youth participation in peaceful collaboration in conflict zones, the fight against terrorism, organizing young people in the fight against corruption, establishing local youth councils and media campaigns for greater participation of the youth in elections;

14. *Calls upon* African parliaments to support initiatives of civil society organizations aimed at promoting participation and political, social and cultural integration of the youth as an alternative to violence, and as a way of contributing to social cohesion and preventing violent extremism, by promoting dialogue, tolerance and citizenship;

15. *Calls upon* African parliaments to encourage participation by young parliamentarians by systematically including them and other men and women in delegations taking part in international debates and forums.