



## Declaration\*

### The 22<sup>nd</sup> G7 Speakers' Meeting

Verona, 6 September 2024

We, the Speakers and Presidents of the G7 Parliaments, reaffirm the central role of Parliaments as the pillars of democracy, representing and publicly expressing the will and the aspirations of our citizens who have freely elected them. By enacting laws, adopting budgets and scrutinising government actions, Parliaments speak on behalf of every member of our individual societies and pursue the general interest of our people.

Within the G7, the Parliaments bear witness at the highest institutional level to the endorsement of our commonly shared values of freedom and democracy, human rights and respect for multilateralism and the rule of law, to which Apulia G7 Leaders' Communiqué, adopted on 14 June 2024, most recently referred.

This profound sharing of the founding values of civil coexistence, ongoing cooperation in every sphere between our countries, and its unwavering unity of purpose in promoting world peace and global security, make the G7 a fundamental benchmark by which to confront today's crises and conflicts which pose a threat to the peace, security and international order that emerged in the aftermath of World War II, grounded on respect for the United Nations Charter. The G7 must embody these values by continuing to strongly oppose to any unilateral attempt to change the rules-based international order by force or coercion.

We therefore firmly reiterate our condemnation of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, with which we stand in unconditional solidarity in its struggle for freedom, security, independence and reconstruction. We reiterate that entities that facilitate Russia's acquisition of items or equipment for its defense industrial base are supporting actions that undermine the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. In this context, we express our strong concern about

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\* It is recognized, that due to their constitutional positions or other factors, certain Speakers cannot directly associate themselves with substantive political statements, and therefore should not be seen as indicating specific support for all sections. Nonetheless, on behalf of their Chambers, they recognize the importance of the issues raised and the intentions of their colleagues in proposing particular ways forward.

transfers to Russia from businesses in China of dual-use materials and components for weapons and equipment for military production.

We trust that the message sent out by convening the Summit on Peace in Ukraine (15-16 June 2024) in Switzerland will lead to the respect of Ukraine's independence and sovereignty, to put an end to unprovoked violence, in accordance with the expectations of international law.

Russia's violation of international law, disregard for human life, further fuelled by its ensuing threats to energy and food security, and its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, are but a few of the factors giving rise to generalised destabilising effects that must be successfully countered by the international community to prevent further escalation and reduce the risk of regional conflicts and tensions.

We reiterate, in the strongest possible terms, our condemnation of the brutal and heinous terror attacks perpetrated by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages still held by Hamas in captivity. The crisis has contributed to rising regional tensions from the Middle East to the Red Sea and fuelling an alarming resurgence of anti-Semitism globally that must be unequivocally condemned and combatted and we call on authorities to take all appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of Jewish citizens as well as urge all parties to refrain from rhetoric that encourages any further escalation. We express our full solidarity and support to Israel and its people and reaffirm our unwavering commitment towards its security, as it has a right and duty to self-defence, complying with international law. We are concerned for the protection of the civilian population of Gaza in view of the continued tactics used by the terrorist group Hamas and the subsequent dire humanitarian situation created as a result. We must see unfettered aid access into Gaza and the UN and the humanitarian partners must be allowed to deliver their operations safely. We remain committed to a ceasefire that upholds the principles of international law and to a path leading to peace. We call on Iran to refrain from providing support for Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis and other non-state actors and look forward to working with likeminded partners to secure a more peaceful and prosperous region.

We are grateful for the appeal made by Pope Francis, the first Pontiff to attend a G7 summit this year, who reiterated that the world cannot function without politics: *“True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good”*.

Parliaments play a unique role, inspired by dialogue and exchange, and are required to take a forward-looking view intended to ensure prosperity, peace, freedom and security for the whole world.

We are therefore committed to improving links between the interparliamentary and intergovernmental dimensions of the G7, convinced that parliamentary diplomacy is a

formidable catalyst for fostering peace and prosperity and for peacefully settling conflicts and disputes through dialogue.

## **1. Security and development: new geopolitical balances and access to strategic resources**

The seriously deteriorating international situation that is giving rise to ever-increasing threats to peace and stability prevents the balanced development of national economies and material and cultural growth. Difficulties in accessing strategic resources, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, strengthening critical infrastructure, natural disasters, tempering migratory pressures, ensuring food and energy supplies and protecting access to information call out for further efforts by free Parliaments to reaffirm the right to security and development on behalf of future generations.

It is in our common interest to begin by addressing the instability and fragmentation of global markets by promoting a free and fair-trading system based on shared, commonly agreed rules, put into practice. Collective security also depends on creating reliable supply chains to reduce the risks caused by geopolitical, military, terrorist, health and environmental shocks. The G7 'Five-Point Plan for Critical Minerals Security' is essential to be able to remove the 'bottlenecks' along the supply chain, mitigate the risk of creating monopolies and remedy the lack of diversified suppliers.

We seek constructive and stable relations with China and recognize the importance of direct and candid engagement to express concerns and manage differences. We recognize the importance of China in global trade. We are committed to advancing free and fair trade, a level playing field, and balanced economic relations, while updating and strengthening the multilateral rule-based trading system with the WTO at its core. We are not trying to harm China or thwart its economic development, indeed a growing China that plays by international rules and norms would be of global interest. However, we express our concerns about China's persistent industrial targeting and comprehensive non-market policies and practices that are leading to global spillovers, market distortions and harmful overcapacity in a growing range of sectors, undermining our workers, industries, and economic resilience and security. We call on China to uphold its commitment to act responsibly in the arenas of cyberspace, space, and maritime rights. We will continue our efforts to disrupt and deter persistent, malicious cyber activity stemming from China.

We express our deep concern at the People's Republic of China's support to Russia. We call on China to press Russia to stop its military aggression and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its troops from Ukraine. We encourage China to support a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on territorial integrity and the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, including through its direct dialogues with Russia and Ukraine. We remain concerned by the human rights situation in China, including in Tibet and in Xinjiang, where forced labor is a major concern to us. We are

also worried by China's crackdown on Hong Kong's autonomy, independent institutions, and civil society and continued erosion of rights and freedom.

We are committed to enhancing energy security by supporting the drafting of regional strategies and policies to address consumption, improve energy efficiency and conservation and diversify sources, including resorting to renewable energy sources, as part of the concrete steps we are taking to meet the targets of international agreements. It is in our collective economic and security interest to establish secure, reliable and clean energy pathways. Throughout the energy transition, the most vulnerable workers and companies must be protected, including through the implementation of appropriate training and retraining programmes.

We hope that the Apulia Food Systems Initiative launched by the G7 Leaders to strengthen global food and nutrition security will prove successful, since it is unacceptable that one person in eleven in the world is suffering from hunger, and that the world is off track to reach any of the global nutrition targets by 2030 according to the latest United Nations Report (2023).

We shall work together to address the challenges of irregular migration, in consultation with the countries of origin and transit, focusing on addressing its causes by means of locally effective development models as well as combating transnational organised crime through the "G7 coalition to prevent and counter the smuggling of migrants". We also recognize the evolving threat of strumentalized migration is playing a destabilizing role across member nations and should be confronted.

We reaffirm our commitment to achieving equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and to promoting, and protecting their rights in all spheres of society.

We will cooperate on a global level, building on our experience with COVID-19, to prevent, prepare for and respond to pandemics and promote unprejudiced access to medical countermeasures (MCMs) for all by encouraging scientific research and international cooperation.

We emphasize that it is crucial for "Human Security", a concept of focusing on individuals and protecting them from wide and serious threats to the lives, livelihood and dignity, to be seen as a guiding principle in tackling those challenges mentioned above.

We are committed to fostering and protecting freedom of religion and belief in every forum, as a right fully enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as members of religious groups, and any people facing persecution on the grounds of their faith or lack thereof are suffering from government restrictions, social hostilities and persecution across the world, as evidenced by the 14th Pew Research Center Annual Report on restrictions on religious freedom.

## **2. The G7 for Africa and the Mediterranean: common challenges to ensure stability and growth**

Africa and the Broader Mediterranean will be a key player in the future of the world. It is currently experiencing a demographic boom and is the youngest continent, with approximately 60% of the population aged below 25 years. By 2050, it will have a population of 2.5 billion people. It is very rich in natural resources and has huge scope for economic growth.

We are mindful of the fact that threats to security and the global order find fertile ground where the need for development is greatest. For this reason, we stand united in sharing our democratic principles, the rule of law and respect for inalienable human rights, and recognise the importance of strengthening our partnership with countries in Africa and the Mediterranean in pursuit of this work.

The development of Africa and the Broader Mediterranean is a G7 priority as the Italian Presidency reiterated at the G7 Apulia Summit, in order to develop a strategic and equal partnership.

Bearing this in mind, we affirm the commitment of G7 Parliaments to contribute to sustainable economic growth and political stability of those regions by promoting measures that support their institutions and populations.

We affirm the need to increase trade and investment with the continent to alleviate poverty, support the proper development of its rich energy resources, and encourage implementation of economic reforms as the surest path towards generating wealth and employment, especially for youth. We cherish our partnerships with a wide array of Africa's civil society communities as partners in providing critical and life sustaining support in health, education and other critical services.

In many African countries, there is increasing interference by foreign actors aiming to make them economically dependent and become hubs of instability. Today, dialogue with our African and Mediterranean partners is more necessary than ever before, to help foster economic and social development and reduce dependency on foreign powers. We decry substandard labour, environmental and legal practices by those who seek to exploit Africa's natural resources. We stand firm with those persecuted by jihadist terrorists.

The Mediterranean has the potential to become an international hub giving access to Africa, Asia and Europe, attracting more investment and stimulating numerous industrial sectors, which could help overcome the structural problems of youth unemployment and socio-economic inequality in the region

The G7 Parliaments can significantly foster this prospect and support the African Union in achieving its Agenda 2063, including promoting science and technology, research and innovation, the industrialisation of the economy and the modernisation of

agriculture, and to connecting with the rest of the world by consolidating its infrastructure network.

The G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), the EU's Global Gateway, and the Mattei Plan for Africa launched by Italy in Rome at the end of January 2024, can mobilise public and private resources to help Africa become an economically strong and independent player on the world stage to reduce inequalities and improve social cohesion.

The trade liberalisation policies being promoted in the African Continental Free Trade Area and the regionally based progress made by the African Union are helping to make the investment climate there more favourable, but debt vulnerability (the World Bank has identified as many as 21 high-risk countries in sub-Saharan Africa in 2023) must be addressed more effectively.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the commitments proposed and to put them into practice, it is crucially important for the G7 countries to coordinate their policies in order to achieve tangible and lasting results with regard to development priorities identified by our African and Mediterranean partners and their regional organisations. Particularly, we recognize again that, as we progress the development cooperations with African partners, “field-oriented approach” should be put at its center, where plans are drafted and implemented based on the needs of the people of countries, as well as the different environments in which they are situated.

We must expand our global partnership with Africa. The African Union's entry into the G20 is an important step in this direction.

We therefore deem it essential to establish a common approach to dialogue and exchange within the parliamentary dimension of the G20 Speakers' Summit (P20), which will be meeting in Brasilia in November 2024, to help accompany Africa and Broader Mediterranean countries in their development efforts.

### **3. Artificial intelligence, cyber-security and the defence of national interests: the role of Parliaments in the digital transition**

As Parliaments of the G7 countries, we are growing more mindful of the fact that the prosperity of our societies depends on developing an open, compatible, reliable and secure digital space, and that our countries are linked by 'digital relations' that transcend national borders.

It is therefore in our common interest to defend cyberspace within which we communicate and which enables the global economy to operate and contributes to the orderly functioning of our democratic institutions.

Helping to disseminate a broader understanding of the implications of cyber security for our everyday life supporting the development of research and spreading high-level

expertise and skills are specific actions that our Parliaments must undertake, working as they do in a globalised world to protect national interests and shared democratic values.

As discussed in the G7 Cybersecurity Working Group, we will improve our collective resilience especially with regard to critical infrastructure facilities, which are under attack by criminal organisations and hostile states.

We share the conviction that cooperation between our Parliaments in this area is essential to ensure a common approach and to raise security and resilience levels.

Recognising the extraordinary potential of Artificial Intelligence to advance progress and development of our societies, we commend responsible innovators of this technology and encourage appropriate adoption of vetted applications that advance prosperity and wellbeing. We take note of the commitment made by G7 Governments last June to promote safe, secure and trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in order to maximise its usefulness, foster innovation and minimise its risks. We agree that the development of Artificial Intelligence must prioritize humans, their dignity, their rights and future generations.

It is equally essential to promote open, transparent and inclusive digital infrastructure that is also made available to the emerging economies with a view to global sustainable development. In this regard, we recognize the need for approaches to AI governance that foster inclusion while mitigating risks building on the outcomes of the AI Seoul Summit and upcoming milestones, including this year's UN Summit of the Future and the AI Action Summit in 2025.

We recognize, within the Hiroshima AI Process, the importance of implementing the International Guiding Principles and the International Code of Conduct for Organizations Developing Advanced AI Systems. Moreover, the development of Artificial Intelligence is posing new specific risks both with regard to its fraudulent use and to any effects that have not been adequately taken into account during its development and when these technologies are adopted. All nations must take particular care to consider the impact of Artificial Intelligence against backdrop of their security posture and necessary measures to protect intellectual property and sensitive data from exploitation by malign actors.

We are committed to supporting an informed, inclusive and democratic debate in public opinion, with a specific focus on young people and on the responsible use and mental impact of Artificial Intelligence, which also takes into account the environmental aspects of using AI technologies.

We believe that Parliaments, according to the rules of each country, must: i) contribute to drafting the *corpus* of rules (governance) that will ensure the sound use of Artificial Intelligence within the framework of the principles and rights to which we all subscribe, ii) empower citizens to understand the promise of the digital transformation and the

responsibility it will require as they exercise their rights and duties, iii) encourage dialogue at the highest level between all stakeholders (researchers, policy makers, and civil society) notably with reference to prospects for the labour market.

In order to protect the democratic values our countries share in the new environment where technologies are becoming increasingly accessible and can be used for wilfully malicious purposes, such as “Deepfakes”, Parliaments will have to continue paying particular care to counter attempts to manipulate information as a means of influencing and interfering in the functioning of our institutions, the reputation of public officials or politically committed persons and particularly in connection with free and fair elections.

Parliaments, as assemblies representing every member of society and cornerstones of democratic governance, are by their very nature called upon to harness the opportunities and take on the challenge of the future and of technological progress, which are hastening their pace. Artificial Intelligence, used within the framework of principles and rights lawfully can help to improve administrative processes in parliamentary services to ensure efficiency, support decision-taking and improve engagement. Parliaments should utilise AI capabilities to explain policies and complex issues to all groups of society in a targeted manner to bridge gaps between the democratic institutions and citizens. In this respect, we agree on the importance of holding a debate to share measures that have been introduced already, as well as best practices, and solutions that we have adopted.



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