



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by:

The Hon. Margaret Mensah Williams
Vice-President of the IPU Executive Committee
Deputy-Chairperson of the National Council of Namibia

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Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take the floor this afternoon on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the world organization of parliaments.

We have heard much, Mr. President, about the need for governments to show the leadership necessary to reverse the tide of this terrible pandemic. Less frequent mention is made of the role of parliaments in the struggle. But it is my personal conviction, both as a Namibian politician and Deputy Speaker of Parliament, and as Vice-President of the IPU Executive Committee, that a more sustained and direct involvement of parliaments is required if we are to meet the 2001 Declaration of Commitments.

Parliaments wield influence, and are a force for change, in many different ways. Parliaments debate and adopt the national budget that provides the funds for AIDS prevention and control. Parliamentarians also have formidable advocacy powers. They scrutinize their governments' spending of the funds they have voted and they call them to order when they are not satisfied with the result. And they play a critical role in involving their constituencies, including those affected by HIV/AIDS and those at risk, in the policy making process.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The IPU's involvement in this cause took a major step forward at its 112th Assembly in Manila in the spring of last year when a landmark resolution was adopted on the role of parliaments in advocating and enforcing the observance of human rights in strategies for dealing with the pandemic. This comprehensive resolution was widely applauded within the United Nations community, and it serves as a valuable plan of action at the parliamentary level.

Building on that resolution, we have since organized a number of activities and events, working in conjunction with UNAIDS, UNDP and UNICEF. Just recently, at our 114th Assembly in Nairobi, we held a substantive panel debate on children and AIDS, at which the participants acknowledged the enormous need for parliamentarians to show more leadership in an area where enlightened statesmanship is sometimes sorely lacking.

Yesterday, we came together at a parliamentary caucus in the wings of this major United Nations review conference. Some 60 parliamentarians from 30 countries attended, many of whom are members of specialized HIV/AIDS committees in their national parliaments.

At the close of a vibrant round of discussions, we established a core group of parliamentarians who will be entrusted with carrying forward AIDS-related work both nationally, within parliament, as well as in the international parliamentary arena.

In conclusion, I think I can say that in the future we will be seeing parliaments, and the IPU, their world organization, taking a more aggressive stand on HIV/AIDS issues. Our electors expect no less of us.

Thank you.