



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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IPU Statement

Hon. Paddy Torsney
Permanent Observer

UN High Level Meeting on
Ending AIDS

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Mr. President,

Parliaments and parliamentarians have very important responsibilities in reaching the 90-90-90 goals and ending AIDS by 2030. As legislators, overseers of government action and opinion leaders, members of parliament are well placed to help strengthen prevention measures and expand access to HIV treatment.

Earlier this week, IPU and UNAIDS organized a side event for parliamentarians attending this High Level Meeting. Members of parliament from five continents identified key actions for parliaments to fast track and end AIDS.

National engagement is key. Parliamentarians must understand the epidemic and who are their most vulnerable groups to ensure effective parliamentary action. As representatives of the people, parliamentarians are a critical link between national strategies, communities and individuals from different walks of life. Parliamentarians' primary objective should be to make a difference in the lives of constituents and particularly those affected by HIV.

In our meeting, many parliamentary colleagues shared examples of bold action they had taken to address the needs of vulnerable populations through legislation and programming. They noted with regret however that thirty-five years into the AIDS epidemic subjective impressions still prevail over facts and evidence, hindering progress with less effective programs and limited action.

In too many places, stigma and legal discrimination persist as an immense barrier to voluntary testing and treatment. As opinion leaders, parliamentarians can play a key role enlightening people, fighting HIV-related stigma and discrimination at the national level and within their local constituency. They can be national role models.

Several participating parliamentarians expressed concern at the overreliance on donor funding for the AIDS response, which is fast depleting in countries graduating to middle-income levels. They recommended that the political commitment to ending AIDS be translated to stronger domestic financing of programs. They called for capacity building and support to parliaments to ensure a sustainable, well-funded AIDS response.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Agenda 2030 acknowledges the “essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring

accountability for implementation of government commitments". Goal 16 explicitly emphasizes importance of effective institutions including parliaments, in implementing all SDGs through coherent policies that capture and build on synergies. This is the main entry point for IPU and national parliaments to engage with this new development framework.

In your meeting here you adopted a Political Declaration that sets a bold new vision of a world free of AIDS. IPU and its members are particularly pleased to see strong references to rights and inequalities throughout this document as well as the importance of effective laws and policies. The world will not meet these noble goals unless parliaments and parliamentarians are engaged. The Declaration recognizes the strong role IPU has played in the AIDS response and we look forward to providing continued contribution.

Parliamentarians effectively engaged in the AIDS response, can and do provide critical leadership in realizing a new vision for health that leaves no one behind. Members of parliament attending the High Level Meeting urged IPU and UNAIDS to work with parliamentarians everywhere to implement the commitments of the 2016 Political Declaration. IPU and UNAIDS have developed tools and handbooks to support parliamentarians engaged in this work and several participants pledged to continue providing peer to peer support for their colleagues in other parliaments.

IPU stands ready to continue the fight to end AIDS.