



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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IPU Statement

Martin Chungong
Secretary General

70th World Health Assembly

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Mr. President,
Madam Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Once again, I have the distinct pleasure to address the 70th World Health Assembly on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, its 173 Member Parliaments and the 47,000 members of parliament out there in the world.

Let me convey the condolences of the global parliamentary community to the Government and people of the United Kingdom over the horrific attack that occurred in Manchester a couple of days ago. The world shall not and must not succumb to such a wanton act.

I wish to congratulate the newly elected Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. His victory is a clear recognition of his sterling leadership qualities and expertise. I wish him every success in his new position.

I would like to pay my warm compliments to Dr. Margaret Chan for her inspirational leadership and passionate work during her 10-year mandate as WHO Director-General. I commend her transformative vision of health that leaves no one behind. I am looking forward to continued robust partnership with the World Health Organization under her successor.

Over the past 10 years, cooperation between the WHO and the IPU has achieved substantial progress in a number of areas, but I would like to highlight two: we have strengthened bridges between the parliamentary decision/policy-making community and the scientific community. We have positioned parliament in the world of global health for what it is, i.e. the primary institution of accountability.

I am delighted to note that, as a result of this strong partnership, members of parliament from across the world are participating in the work of the World Health Assembly, in increasing numbers. It is of utmost importance that they contribute to shaping the global health agenda and that they discharge their parliamentary functions back home in order to achieve the health-related targets of the SDGs.

In this respect, the IPU is pleased to be partnering with Austria, Bangladesh, Cameroon and the WHO in organizing a parliamentary side event that will take place for the second consecutive year at the World Health Assembly. Scheduled for Monday, 29 May, the event will focus on how parliamentarians can use scientific evidence to inform national decision-making and oversight.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I need not remind you that parliament is the institution responsible for translating international instruments and commitments into the national legislative framework and ensuring that legal recognition of health as a human right is upheld in national law. As representatives of the people, parliamentarians should avail themselves of their constitutional powers to promote and ensure the realization of rights to health in order to articulate and implement the aspirations of people for health and well-being. Parliament is also the institution that holds governments to account for their commitments and holds the purse strings.

The IPU is proud to have supported, in partnership with the WHO, development of renewed legislation on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Parliament of Rwanda; increased allocation of funds by the Parliament of Tanzania to encourage uptake of family planning services; and organization of community outreach by the Parliaments of Bangladesh, Rwanda and Uganda in sensitizing constituents to everyone's right to the highest attainable standard of health.

The IPU's technical support to parliaments is grounded in the Global Strategy for Women's, Children' and Adolescents' Health, which serves as a reference point to drive parliamentary action to the benefit of all, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Also, I am elated to be a member of the SUN Movement Lead Group established by the UN Secretary-General to help scale up nutritional standards for the most vulnerable.

As the SDGs take centre stage in the global agenda, I am mindful of the cross-cutting nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how improving health systems is dependent on many factors outside the health sector. I am also aware that Agenda 2030 reminds us all that to continue business as usual is not an option. It is in this spirit that the IPU will support parliaments to deliver on the targets of SDG3 and, therefore, build better national health systems.

Thank you.