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135th IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

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Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(e) Parliamentary Meeting at the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS

New York, 7 June 2016

The 2016 High-level Meeting on Ending AIDS took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 8 to 10 June 2016. The Meeting reviewed progress towards implementing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 and 2011 Political Declarations on HIV/AIDS. A new declaration was also adopted to guide the global AIDS response in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN Resolution that established the modalities of the High-level Meeting (A/70/L.38) invited the IPU to contribute to that Meeting. It also encouraged Member States to include parliamentarians in their national delegation to the event.

The IPU and UNAIDS held a side event for the parliamentarians attending the UN Meeting. The side event highlighted that national engagement is critical to ending AIDS. To be able to act effectively, parliamentarians must understand the epidemic and know who the most vulnerable groups are. Their primary objective should be to make a difference in the lives of their constituents, particularly those affected by HIV.

In the meeting, many parliamentarians shared examples of bold action they had taken to address the needs of vulnerable populations through legislation and programming. However, they noted with regret that 35 years into the AIDS epidemic, subjective perceptions still prevail over facts and evidence. Progress is therefore hindered by less effective programmes 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 in enlightening people. They can be national role models, fighting HIV-related stigma and discrimination, both nationally and within their local constituencies.

Several participating parliamentarians expressed concern at the overreliance on donor funding for the AIDS response, which is being swiftly depleted in countries graduating to middle-income levels. They recommended that the political commitment to ending AIDS be translated into more strongly financed national programmes. They called for capacity building and support to parliaments to ensure a sustainable, well-funded AIDS response.

Members of parliament attending the High-level Meeting urged the IPU and UNAIDS to work with parliamentarians everywhere to implement the commitments of the 2016 Political Declaration. The IPU and UNAIDS have developed tools and handbooks to support parliamentarians engaged in this work. Several participants pledged to continue providing peer-to-peer support to their colleagues in other parliaments.

#IPU135