

THE IPU ADVISORY GROUP ON HIV/AIDS An Introduction

Members of parliament are engaged throughout the world in local, national and, in some cases international AIDS responses. They play a variety of roles: as popular representatives and advocates, as policy makers, and as legislators. Over the last two decades, networks of parliamentarians concerned about AIDS have emerged in many countries. Missing until recently, however, was a coordinated *institutional* effort by parliaments to integrate strategies and policy prescriptions to combat HIV/AIDS in a mutually supportive effort. The IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS comes to fill that gap.

The Advisory Group was born in the fall of 2006 following a meeting of Members of Parliament organized in cooperation with UNAIDS and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on AIDS. It is a small group of legislators who are leaders in their home parliaments on HIV/AIDS and related issues. Its mission consists of:

- Providing guidance to the 147 national parliaments that are members of the IPU on the implementation of international commitments on HIV/AIDS;
- Helping design information and training materials for parliamentarians worldwide;
- Conducting field visits to learn lessons from national responses to HIV/AIDS which can be shared with the wider parliamentary community;
- Functioning as the organizing committee of future inter-parliamentary conferences on HIV/AIDS;
- Expanding the scope of the parliamentary response against HIV/AIDS by identifying more effective strategies;
- Prompting other parliamentarians to assume positions of leadership in HIV/AIDS issues.

Current activities of the Advisory Group include: overseeing the organization of a Global Meeting of Parliamentarians on HIV/AIDS, in November 2007, on the theme of *Leadership*; coordinating the production of a *Handbook for Parliamentarians on HIV/AIDS*; and conducting a field visit to Brazil.

The current Advisory Group members are: Jesudas Seelam (India), Franklin Drilon (Philippines), Michael Grishankov (Russia), Elizabeth Alpha Lavalie (Sierra Leone), Henrietta Bogopane Zulu (South Africa), Eva Bjorling (Sweden), Elioda Tumwesigye (Uganda), Neil Gerrard (United Kingdom).

UNAIDS, UNDP, and UNICEF participate in the activities of the Advisory Group and provide technical support. Funding is provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The Advisory Group meets periodically at the IPU Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

For more information about membership or future activities of the Advisory Group, please contact the Secretary of the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS, Mr. James Jennings, at jj@mail.ipu.org.