



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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IPU Statement

Martin Chungong
Secretary General

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Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful for the opportunity to address this distinguished gathering, the first time an IPU Secretary General is speaking to the Assembly of world health leaders. My address today follows on the heels of a historic statement, WHO Director General Dr Margaret Chan made at the IPU Assembly General Assembly here in Geneva last October. Clearly, she and I are anxious to bring together our respective constituencies with a view to promoting better health outcomes for the citizens of the world.

Dr. Chan presented to the global parliamentary community her vision of collaboration between WHO and the IPU. That vision of parliaments contributing to universal health coverage and ensuring access to health for the most vulnerable and marginalized is at the heart of our future engagement.

I notice with pleasure, the increasing number of parliamentarians who are attending the WHA. I see this in the context of a partnership that should help government authorities to forge strong alliances with their legislators for better and more effective policies and resources to the health sector.

In the same spirit, during this Assembly, in fact tomorrow, we will be organizing a side event, the first of its kind at a World Health Assembly, where parliamentarians will be discussing with other health stakeholders what parliaments and their members can do to promote the global health agenda. I am looking forward to those discussions and I wish to thank the governments and parliaments of Bangladesh, Italy and Lesotho for sponsoring the event.

I am pleased to see that your general debate is focusing on the implementation of the new global development agenda.

Over the past 10 years, we have endeavoured to give prominent profile to health on the IPU agenda. We have set up governance structures that provide technical policy guidance to the IPU in its efforts to support better health outcomes. I am pleased that WHO is a strong partner in our Advisory Group on Health a small group of qualified parliamentarians from all corners of the globe that provides guidance, expertise and skills to properly exercise law-making, oversight, leadership and advocacy duties. Many members of that Group are present at this WHA.

Looking back on achievements, in partnership with parliaments and WHO, the IPU has obtained remarkable results in the areas of HIV/AIDS and women's and children's

health. Just to mention some telling examples, we are proud to have supported development of renewed and forward-looking legislation on sexual and reproductive health by the Parliament of Rwanda; the Parliament of Uganda in exercising effective oversight and increasing allocation of funds to health facilities in the most marginalized areas; and the Bangladesh Parliament in its outreach work to end child marriage.

At the global level, there has been recognition and strong support for the IPU's and parliamentary efforts. IPU regularly provides parliamentary input into key international processes on health and we have recently made a bold commitment to the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. We are pleased to have been invited by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to sit on the high-level panels of the Strategy and the Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we enter a new era marked by the Sustainable Development Goals, it is important to stress the importance of effective institutions for development. 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". The emphasis on effective institutions, including parliaments, in implementing all SDGs through coherent policies and laws that build on synergies is the key entry point for IPU and national parliaments to engage with this new development framework.

It is in this spirit that the IPU is keen to play a prominent role in implementation of SDG 3 on health. I am looking forward to a robust partnership with you all within the framework of WHO.

Thank you.