



VIETNAM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



INTER - PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Regional Seminar for the IPU Asia-Pacific Group
TAKING EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY ACTION AGAINST
HIV AND AIDS

Hanoi, 10 – 12 December 2009

SEMINAR RECOMMENDATIONS

We, members of parliament from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, South Africa, Nepal, Palau, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Viet Nam, Uganda and Uruguay, meeting at the Seminar on HIV and AIDS for the IPU Asia-Pacific Group, discussed questions relating to the influence our parliaments could have on the epidemic within the region. The discussion was enriched by views and experiences from other parts of the world provided by members of the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS.

The meeting discussed different challenges facing the legislator relating to HIV and AIDS. Particular attention was paid to appropriate legislative responses to people living with HIV and AIDS, access to affordable medicines and people most vulnerable to the epidemic. These included injecting drug users, sex workers, men who have sex with men and other vulnerable people.

The discussion was informed by the particular context of Viet Nam; a number of people involved in the Vietnamese response to the epidemic, both members of parliament and representatives of international and civil society organizations, made significant contributions to the debate. The meeting owed much to UNAIDS for its input.

The meeting looked at the issue of decriminalization of sex work, drug use and same sex relations within the context of harm reduction. Questions relating to the decriminalization of HIV transmission also figured in the exchanges.

Recommendations:

In general terms, it was agreed that parliaments and their committees that deal with HIV and AIDS should avail themselves fully of the powers at their disposal.

On that basis, parliaments of the region should focus on reform of HIV and AIDS legislation on harm reduction among drug users, sex workers, and stigma and discrimination issues where it was not sufficiently attuned to an effective and compassionate response, as well as access to affordable treatment. They should strive to engage with countries that have already undergone reform or where debates are being held at a similar level.

Particular attention should also be paid the way the law is enforced. In some places, stigma and discrimination negate its full force. By the same token, it is also important for parliaments to make sure that adequate funding is attached to legislation.

Parliaments should use their powers of oversight, conduct more research and enquiry, look into the underlying issues, work with relevant civil society organizations and where necessary make study visits to the parliaments of other countries.

Greater knowledge is needed among legislators about the practical aspects of the epidemic as they relate to the lives of those living with the virus. More meetings should be held in parliament with representatives of groups of people living with HIV, and good contacts should be established with their networks in all parts of the country.

The IPU is urged to:

- Organize regular conferences to review legislation and policies on the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS with the aim of promoting effective implementation of such legislation.
- Provide regularly updated information on legislation and policies on HIV and AIDS in order to share experiences on the role of parliaments in the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS.
- Coordinate with UN agencies, international organizations including the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, regional and other inter-parliamentary forums and civil society organizations to improve the effectiveness of parliamentary activities for the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS.