



141st IPU Assembly

Belgrade (Serbia)
13-17 October 2019



Side event *Reaching the hard-to-reach: How to make UHC a reality for all?*

Wednesday, 16 October 2019, 1–2.30 p.m.
Hall 15/1 (first floor), Building A, Sava Centre

Co-organized by the IPU, WHO and PMNCH

Concept note

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges to "leave no one behind", thus recognizing that the Agenda's Goals and targets should be met for all people and countries. This principle is central to universal health coverage (UHC), which aims to ensure all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship. The 141st IPU Assembly is expected to adopt a resolution on *Achieving universal health coverage by 2030: The role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health*, which will constitute the first global parliamentary instrument on UHC, and complement the political declaration adopted by United Nations Member States at the High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in September 2019.

Too often the benefits of development are not equally shared by women, children, youth, people living with HIV, people living with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups – both in developed and developing countries. Universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will only be achieved if hard-to-reach populations and regions are adequately identified and prioritized in each country.

Parliaments and parliamentarians have a key role to play in ensuring that the commitment to "leave no one behind" is translated into effective action, usually through national laws. They are not only responsible for the development and establishment of a comprehensive legal framework for the protection and promotion of human rights, but also for ensuring that these rights are converted into equitable opportunities and well-being for all sectors of society through the passage of laws banning discrimination, the repeal of discriminatory laws and the removal of other barriers to equity; the provision of adequate budget allocations to interventions targeting the ones most in need; and the exercise of oversight on the effectiveness of laws and policies with a particular focus on vulnerable and marginalized populations.

As "leaving no one behind" requires deliberate laws and policies to target the furthest ones first, a precise understanding of target populations based on disaggregated data is needed. However, a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient, as drivers of inequality – in terms of geography, gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, etc. – also interact with each other, creating overlapping patterns of exclusion.

Based on examples of countries in different regions, this side event will discuss best practices and challenges of parliamentary action in turning the "leave no one behind" pledge into practice. The focus will be in particular on SDG 3 – Good health and well-being, as a Goal that is central to the lives of people and that is closely linked to all other SDGs, and on SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions, which is a cross-cutting enabler and accelerator of the whole SDGs agenda. Through the exchange of best practices and the sharing of personal experiences in reaching the hard-to-reach, the event will identify lessons learnt and share solutions on how to drive progress on the SDGs by reaching marginalized regions and populations, and how to ensure that the needs and rights of these groups are adequately addressed.