

“WHO recognizes the right of every human being, without distinction of any kind, to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health – and the critical role that parliamentarians have to play. We commend the IPU on the 2019 landmark resolution on UHC and celebrate the strong partnership between WHO and IPU which bridges science and policy to achieve health for all.

Such action is urgently needed: half of the world’s population lacks access to essential health services, including sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services.

This is an outcome of a diverse range of factors including lack of prioritizing gender equality. The situation is worse for girls and women, adolescents, and those living with disabilities in fragile contexts where their SRH needs often go unmet, and their rights are undermined.

We recognize that in every country, deep-rooted inequalities and power asymmetries in gender and social norms are often at the heart of inequities in health and the neglect of the health of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals.

We also recognize that global resolutions are just the beginning. Implementation at the national level, in ways that are effective and responsive to every country’s specific population needs, is the next challenge. And it is absolutely where the real impact lies.

WHO is committed to working with you, and your national parliaments, towards achieving universal health coverage and to ensuring that all people, including populations in situations of vulnerability, receive quality, rights-based sexual and reproductive health services, without financial hardship.

Yesterday, in a side event we hosted with IPU on UHC and gender equality, with SRHR as the key. In a lively, honest, collaborative discussion, we heard from delegations just how transformative it can be when you advocate for health policies that are gender responsive, not gender blind. You are making menstrual health products available free of charge to girls and women. You are removing policies that stigmatize blood donation based on sexual orientation. You are promoting access family planning information and services. We have so much to learn from each other about the successes and challenges you are facing.

WHO celebrates parliamentarians taking actions that promote and protect human rights and dignity, considering the specific needs of all women, girls, and gender diverse individuals, including their sexual and reproductive health needs and rights, with a view to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all in health policies and health systems delivery.

We want to be a resource to you, your parliaments and your constituents, and look forward to our continued partnership. Thank you.”