

Hon. Mariam
UNITE Parliamentarians Network for Global Health

IPU152 General Debates – April 18

Madam President, Secretary General Chungong, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to address you on behalf of the UNITE Parliamentarians Network for Global Health.

Let me first extend our special gratitude to the IPU leadership and the host Parliament of Turkey for the remarkable organization of this Assembly and facilitating the critically needed peace-building dialogue.

UNITE is the only network of current and former legislators dedicated to evidence-based health policies, and today we represent 545 parliamentarians from 120 countries.

Allow me address this esteemed Assembly with 3 core messages:

First, as parliamentarians, we must secure sustainable health financing - both nationally and globally.

- The COVID pandemic reminded us that health challenges have no borders.
- Yet geopolitical tensions and diminishing multilateralism have already jeopardized hard-won gains in global health.
- As direct representatives of our citizens, we shall prioritize health of our populations in national budgets.
- In high-income donor countries, we should advocate for increased official development assistance for health, which is currently at a historic low.

Second, we must advance a women-centered agenda both in parliaments and in global health.

- Evidence is clear. More women in Parliaments means stronger democracies and greater freedom of countries. Yet women hold only 27% of parliamentary seats.
- At the population level, 66% of the poorest women still face financial barriers and 20% of women need permission to seek essential healthcare.
- As policymakers, we shall change this status quo.

Finally, we can learn from each other how better policies save lives and bring economic gains to our societies.

- UNITE brings together best practices from different countries and regions.
- For example, we can learn from Egypt how to scale up Universal Health Care and Hepatitis C elimination. I am delighted to acknowledge Prof. Ashraf Hatem, the former Minister of Health of Egypt who drove those critically important changes.
- We can also help address infectious diseases and Sepsis, which kills 11 million women, children, and men every year, and learn from countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, Ireland or Qatar.
- UNITE can advise on health AI regulations and support the ratification of the Pandemic Agreement

Let me take this opportunity to invite all interested colleagues to join our network and the UNITE Global Summit in the Philippines on August 3 and 4.

We may not be doctors or public health experts, but as parliamentarians, we hold a unique power. We can save lives in times of peace - and especially in times of crisis - by adopting the right laws and budgets.

Let us use this privilege wisely.