

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Mohammad Reza Majidi
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On

Item 1 of the 142nd Assembly Agenda

**“Overcoming the pandemic today and building a better tomorrow: the role of
parliaments “**

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(Virtual Format)

**Dear Colleagues,
Distinguished Delegates**

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to present my viewpoints through this paper to the participants of the 142nd IPU Assembly. Now that the prevailing global pandemic has deprived us from sitting together face to face in physical meetings, this virtual session should be welcomed as a precious opportunity to share our views as much as possible; thanks to technological advancements which has provided us this invaluable condition.

The theme of general debate for this Assembly is of key importance considering the traumatic aspects of the pandemic which has so far taken great toll as an unprecedented crisis in the recent history. In that, this tragic situation has further brought to fore and challenged the already fragile world economic system, leading to further unveil inequalities more visible.

Under such circumstances, the role of Parliaments becomes more relevant than ever before. Strong parliamentary approaches should be called to seek solution in the face of the virus crisis parallel to the services to be rendered by the governments. It should be underscored that this is a global tragedy in nature and calls for global response. This is why the Inter-parliamentary Union and certain other parliamentary bodies have spared no efforts to plan strategies at **both domestic and international arena** in an attempt to introduce best practices for better controlling the situation .

1. As regards domestic strategies:

- Parliaments should do everything within their power to ensure that governments treat this new crisis with foresight and resolute action in order to contain its effects while they can still be controlled.

- Parliaments must be on full alert to impose their check and balance on the executive power to better serve the people. This inherent duty is redoubled in such emergency case when the executive may resort to various excuses to limit freedom of the people. However, it should be noted that parliaments themselves are faced with certain restrictions in running their every day parliamentary business, due to not being able to hold their regular sittings as usual.
- Parliamentarians, while playing their central role through effective legislation, representation and oversight, need to push for investing more in health sector which in turn could translate into accelerating the efforts aimed to curb further spread of the corona virus pandemic.
- Parliamentarians are the mainstay and centerpiece of measures that should be duly adopted to ensure efficient and equitable distribution of medical equipment and vaccination process. It is under diligent exercise of their oversight and adoption of strict policies in favor of transparent acts that force governments to avoid resort to any disproportionate measures as part of their mandate within the context of immunization strategies.
- However, despite all such measures, percentage of successful coping with the pandemic in every country most particularly in the democratically developed countries depends on the level of trust placed by people in their government. According to Muhammad Ali Pate, Global director for Health, Nutrition and Population at the World Bank

” Transparency is essential to earn the trust of people. Without it, vaccination campaigns will not be successful. We need trust at all levels to overcome this pandemic and get on a path to recovery.”

2. As regards strategies at international level:

In the fight against COVID-19 pandemic, multilateral cooperation tops the global agenda, though the already shaky system of international relations has shown its further weaknesses in the aftermath of the current pandemic. Yet history shows us that in moments of such shared and extreme hardship, the world can come together in a spirit of solidarity to lay the

foundations for a better future. In fact, building better tomorrow strongly depends on the policies we adopt today.

As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said: “How fast we emerge from this crisis will depend not only on the solidarity we show within our communities and our countries, but also on the degree to which governments, scientists, businesses and of course parliaments can cooperate together across borders and continents. This is the meaning of multilateralism. It is not an ideology; it is simply a methodology, the best one we have, to deal with truly global challenges.

Under such circumstances, all countries are concerned about access to medical equipment, including vaccines and medicines. Here the core essence of parliamentary diplomacy within the framework of health diplomacy as an important measure at regional and international levels finds its real meaning. One important concern of the countries is their financial ability and equal access for all, including those most vulnerable and marginalized. This makes the need for parliamentary dimension of regional and international cooperation more urgent.

According to the IPU Secretary General, Martin Chungong, “The COVID-19 pandemic impacts everyone, but especially the poor and marginalized groups such as migrants, refugees and stateless people. Each parliament has a responsibility to ensure that all the people, including the most vulnerable, have access to a vaccine- it is a question of rights and safety for all.”

Personal interests and short-term benefits should not sacrifice a cooperative system and long-term benefits. This is the important point that should be duly taken into consideration. Having said that, one should note that the role of multilateral organizations today is to guard against any tension, which may cause degradation of international relations. International and regional parliamentary organizations should work together and demonstrate that with shared decisions we will be better off against this invisible enemy as well as others. This is the central point addressed by the Asian Parliamentary Assembly at its first virtual meeting last year.

As a regional parliamentary body in pursuit of realization of democratic standards, APA with 44 members in the vast and densely populated Continent of Asia believes that response to pandemic should be seen as a family unit. To this end, in the course of its actions it has

underlined the vision for supply chains of goods and services as an important step for well being of populations under this disastrous situation when a large number of families have lost their main source of income and livelihood.

In the declaration adopted under the title of

“Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic in public health, economy and other fields in the Asian Continent”

Adopted by APA members on July 09, 2020, participants at the First APA Virtual Meeting underscored the vision of action on an equal basis without any discrimination to ensure COVID-19 Vaccines reach all countries and counter any selective policies in distribution of the vaccines expected to be produced

Effective multilateralism and rules-based international system as an open and inclusive, transparent and fit for the purpose of improving global pandemic prevention, preparedness and response capacity was also a matter of grave concern for the APA participants at this virtual meeting.

Therefore, currently we stand in a historically seminal moment and thus the right time to take the right decision, because destiny of our future to lessen further losses, in the area of economic restructuring, social and environmental benefits for everyone extremely depends on our decision today.

Thank you