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## 146th IPU Assembly Manama (11–15 March 2023)

### Workshop on sexual and reproductive health

#### *Preparing young people for a safe, healthy, fulfilling life: Parliamentarians advancing comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) with and for their communities*

Tuesday, 14 March 2023, 17:00 – 18:30  
Hall 2 (EWB)

#### Concept note

#### Background

In the Kigali Declaration endorsed at the 145th IPU Assembly in Rwanda,<sup>1</sup> parliamentarians from around the world committed to end gender-based discrimination, violence and other harmful practices, and to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice for all women and girls.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning, can be a game-changer in making this vision a reality. Its aims are as follows:

- To improve knowledge and understanding, and to correct misconceptions, by providing age-appropriate, scientifically accurate and culturally relevant information
- To promote self-awareness and norms that are equitable and respectful of others, by providing opportunities to discuss and reflect on thoughts and feelings, attitudes and values
- To build the social skills needed to make responsible choices and to carry them out, by providing structured opportunities to practise those skills

In a world where HIV and AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, gender-based violence and gender inequality still pose serious risks to young peoples' well-being, CSE is an important route to preparing children and adolescents for the choices they will need to make and the challenges they are likely to face in their sexual and reproductive lives.

Although there is sound evidence<sup>2</sup> that well-designed and well-delivered CSE contributes to good sexual and reproductive health, and that it does not cause harm or hasten sexual activity, it can be a sensitive topic.

<sup>1</sup> IPU, *Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world*, resolution adopted at the 145th IPU Assembly, Kigali, Rwanda, 15 October 2022:

<https://www.ipu.org/file/15355/download>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and others, *International technical guidance on sexuality education: an evidence-informed approach* (Paris: UNESCO, 2018):

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770>.

Resistance comes from a variety of stakeholders, and for many reasons. But the impact of this resistance is ultimately the same: it promotes misinformation and jeopardizes young people's opportunities to prepare for a safe, productive, fulfilling life.

Commitment, conversation and compromise are essential for building support and overcoming resistance to CSE. It is no surprise that parliamentarians have a critical role to play in this work, as well as in responding to growing calls for countries to deliver CSE within national programmes.

There is a growing consensus between government, parliament and civil society about the value of CSE – and there are coordinated efforts to engage those who are unsure about its value or are resistant to it.

CSE aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commitment to educate children for sustainable lifestyles, human rights and gender equality.<sup>3</sup> It is also consistent with the special attention given to adolescents in the IPU's landmark resolution *Achieving universal health coverage by 2030: The role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health*, adopted at the 141st Assembly in Belgrade, Serbia.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, CSE presents an opportunity for parliamentarians to harness a global mandate to work with and for their communities.

## Discussion

This workshop will bring together parliamentarians to share perspectives on CSE from their national contexts. Participants will discuss the following questions, with particular reference to parliamentary functions:

1. Why is it important for parliamentarians to understand and engage with CSE as a political priority, both globally and in individual constituencies?
2. What are the challenges and barriers that parliamentarians face in advancing CSE?
3. How can parliamentarians adapt successful strategies for promoting, protecting and enhancing CSE in their respective countries?
4. What are the legal barriers that prevent young people from accessing CSE services in individual country contexts?
5. How can those young people who are hardest to reach be served?

The workshop is organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

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<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, "Adolescent health": [https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health#tab=tab_1).

<sup>4</sup> IPU, *Achieving universal health coverage by 2030: The role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health*, resolution adopted at the 141st IPU Assembly, Belgrade, Serbia, 17 October 2019: <https://www.ipu.org/file/8200/download>.