



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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148th IPU Assembly

Geneva, 23–27 March 2024

Panel discussion

Climate change and conflict: How can parliaments ensure health during times of crises?

Tuesday, 26 March 2024, 14:30-16:00

Concept note

Background

Climate change and conflict are two of the greatest threats facing humankind in the 21st century. Nearly a quarter of the global population is living in settings affected by conflict, displacement and disasters.¹ As the impacts of climate change intensify and critical natural resources are diminishing, peace and security are increasingly being undermined. Similarly, insecurity caused by conflict limits people's ability to cope with climate shocks. As countries grapple with the threats of climate change and conflict, the negative social and economic impacts of these crises undermine the health and well-being of local populations.

The convergence of climate change, conflict and health emergencies creates a complex situation that must be addressed through an integrated approach. In many of the countries most affected by climate change and conflict, health infrastructure is insufficient and people lack access to basic healthcare. Furthermore, countries enduring conflict and climate change are also less likely to be able to cope with health crises. This can further heighten insecurity and drive displacement. By the end of 2023, 114 million people globally were displaced due to conflict, persecution and climate-related disasters.² More than 70% of epidemic-prone diseases and 60% of preventable maternal deaths occur in fragile and conflict-affected settings.³

Global attention on the interlinkages between climate change, conflict and health is increasing. At the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, a thematic day entitled *Health, relief, recovery and peace* was organized to address the compounding nature of these threats. It is well known that the most vulnerable members of society are the most adversely affected in crisis situations. Robust and equitable solutions to safeguard health in the context of climate change and conflict are urgently required, particularly for those most at risk.

Parliaments are uniquely positioned to ensure that the legislative frameworks and budget allocations in their countries take into account the links between climate, conflict and health. They can promote a stronger health infrastructure that is resilient to the shocks and stresses created by humanitarian crises. They can hold their governments accountable for ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized groups have access to basic healthcare even in the face of climate change and conflict, and even if they are displaced.

¹ www.who.int/activities/accessing-essential-health-services-in-fragile-conflict-affected-and-vulnerable-settings

² www.unrefugees.org/news/six-humanitarian-crises-that-impacted-refugees-and-displaced-communities-in-2023/

³ www.who.int/activities/accessing-essential-health-services-in-fragile-conflict-affected-and-vulnerable-settings

Objectives

This event will bring together climate change, peace and security and health experts, civil society representatives and parliamentarians from around the world to exchange insights on how best to ensure positive health outcomes during crises. This event will build on the outcomes of the recently concluded three-part IPU webinar series on health in climate emergencies. The webinar series highlighted the experiences of parliaments in linking climate and health in emergency situations, including in both the preparedness and response phases. It also focused on promoting key principles of equity and resilience in the context of health and climate emergencies.

The event will provide a platform for parliamentarians to discuss challenges and opportunities for promoting an integrated approach to addressing climate, conflict and health concerns at the national level. Additionally, it will identify options for long-term resilience-building to ensure health is protected for all members of society during crises.

Guiding questions

Following the panelists' presentations, time will be allocated for an interactive discussion and participants will have the opportunity to take the floor.

Parliamentarians are encouraged to address the following questions:

- What are the major challenges for safeguarding health during times of crises?
- How can parliaments support the provision of health services in the context of climate change and conflict?
- How can parliaments work with their constituents, particularly those who are the most vulnerable, and with civil society to ensure equitable access to basic healthcare in crisis situations?

Practical arrangements

This 90-minute session is open to all delegates at the 148th IPU Assembly.

Interpretation will be provided in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.