



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

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## Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

WHA77 parliamentary dialogue: Opening session  
The role of parliamentarians in moving the global health agenda forward

Geneva, 29 May 2024

Dear Mr. Director-General – Dear Dr. Tedros,  
Dear Chair and Vice-Chair of the IPU Advisory Group on Health,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the global organization of national parliaments, I am delighted to welcome you to this parliamentary dialogue. I am pleased that after the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic we are resuming the practice of dedicating a space to parliamentarians at the World Health Assembly. I wish to thank our partners from WHO and my friend Dr. Tedros for their leadership and commitment in promoting parliamentary engagement at the WHA.

Parliaments and parliamentarians play important roles in their home countries, but they are not traditional actors in global health. However, the world today requires us to think and act differently.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a clear reminder of the interconnectedness of the world when it comes to health – especially viruses. Countries cannot be properly prepared without collaborating with their close and distant neighbours, and without ensuring that all have the necessary capacities to detect and respond to health threats. This is why the Pandemic Accord is one of the key items in our discussion today. The IPU has been raising awareness among parliamentarians on the negotiations so as to prepare the ground for ratification and implementation at the national level.

This is a second important reason for parliamentarians to be more informed and engaged on what happens in the international arena. They are the ones that will be called upon to translate international instruments and frameworks into the national level. Information is the starting point, especially at a time marked by misinformation and disinformation. Being involved and having first-hand information will guide parliamentarians in their decision-making at the national level to shape a way forward in line with local needs.

Parliamentarians can also provide feedback on the needs of the people they represent to ensure global health processes are informed by lived experiences, remain people-centred, and provide solutions for addressing persisting inequalities.

Finally, the challenges we face are too complex and interlocked for one actor alone. Together we are stronger. It starts from within parliament – by working across party lines for global public goods such as health; within government, with a communication line and collaboration between governments and parliaments; within societies, by ensuring all have a voice; up to the international level, where multilateralism is more needed than ever.

This is why I cherish so much the partnership between the IPU and WHO, because in a world marked by tensions, conflicts and crises, we work together to foster dialogue, empower parliamentarians, build strong, democratic institutions, and put health and well-being at the centre. In March, at the last IPU Assembly, I had the honour of hosting Dr. Tedros and to sign a new Memorandum of Understanding with him. And today I am here with you in what I hope is the first of a long series of parliamentary meetings in the context of the World Health Assembly. The IPU and myself personally remain committed to

leveraging the biggest and most important health gathering in the world to foster parliamentary engagement for the health and well-being of all.

Thank you.