



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Workshop on taxes on tobacco for a better universal health coverage in Cameroon

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Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Distinguished Partners and Guests,

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to address you at the beginning of this important workshop on health taxes for universal health coverage.

Let me begin by sincerely thanking the National Assembly of Cameroon and the Oxygen Network for their leadership and collaboration, as well as our longstanding partners of the World Health Organization who are playing a vital role in supporting this process.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union has been working closely with WHO to expand the work of parliamentarians on health taxes, not as fiscal tools, but as powerful instruments for universal health coverage. At a time when health systems around the world are under growing pressure and national budgets are stretched, it is critical that we shift the narrative: health is not a cost—it is an investment. An investment in people, productivity, and long-term prosperity.

Tobacco taxes, in particular, offer a unique opportunity to reduce consumption, prevent disease, and generate domestic revenue. We are pleased to build on the strong foundation of existing parliamentary efforts

on tobacco control and to help integrate a deeper focus on health taxes, tailored to Cameroon's context.

Of course, none of this can be achieved without political will. That is why this workshop is so important. We hope it marks the beginning of a broader, sustained parliamentary engagement on the issue of tobacco taxation. I am also very glad that local stakeholders are here today—your expertise and voices are essential. It is only together that we can make progress.

Finally, let me reaffirm that the IPU stands ready to continue supporting the Parliament of Cameroon in this effort. Together, we can build healthier futures through sound, evidence-based policies.

I wish you fruitful discussions. Thank you.