



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

T +41 22 919 41 50
F +41 22 919 41 60
E postbox@ipu.org
www.ipu.org

Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva – Switzerland

Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

WHA79 Global Parliamentary Forum
Welcome, introduction to the Forum and introduction of Speakers Part 1

Geneva, 20 May 2026

Honourable Members of Parliament,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me also to acknowledge WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros, who will join us later today.

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this WHA Global Parliamentary Forum, jointly convened by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the World Health Organization. I thank all parliamentarians, government representatives, civil society partners and stakeholders joining us today for your commitment to advancing health as a human right and a shared global responsibility.

The Global Parliamentary Forum is an annual event that serves as a platform to align parliamentary engagement with the priorities of the World Health Assembly. It also aims to strengthen the role of parliaments in advancing global health commitments at the national level. This year, our discussions will focus on two critical priorities: the WHO Pandemic Agreement and sustainable financing for health. These issues are central to building more resilient, equitable and prepared health systems for the future. IPU has actively supported pandemic preparedness by developing, together with WHO, the handbook *Strengthening Health Security Preparedness* and convening regional conferences for parliamentarians from Africa and the Asia-Pacific to advance global health security.

This Forum comes at a defining moment for global health governance. Last year, WHO Member States reached a historic milestone with the adoption of the Pandemic Agreement, an achievement born from the hard lessons of COVID-19 and from the collective determination to ensure the world is better prepared for future health emergencies. But agreements alone do not save lives. Progress depends on what happens next, in national parliaments, in legislation, in budgets and in accountability mechanisms that translate global consensus into meaningful action for people everywhere.

The theme of today's Forum, *"From Commitment to Action: Advancing Parliamentary Leadership for the WHO Pandemic Agreement Implementation and Sustainable Financing for Health"*, could not be more timely.

The coming months will be critical. The finalization of the **Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS) Annex** will pave the way for signature and ratification of the Pandemic Agreement. Once that process begins, countries will need strong parliamentary leadership to align national legal frameworks, strengthen preparedness systems and ensure equitable access to health services and medical countermeasures.

At the same time, we know that preparedness without financing is only aspiration. Sustainable financing for health is not simply a technical discussion. It is a political and moral choice. Investment in health is investment in security, stability and sustainable development. Stronger domestic resource mobilization, strategic health taxes and accountable public spending are essential if countries are to build resilient health systems capable of protecting their populations from future shocks.

Parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to champion this agenda. Through legislation, budget scrutiny and oversight, they can help ensure that health remains a national priority even in times of economic

uncertainty and competing demands. They also bring the voices of citizens directly into policy discussions, reinforcing trust, transparency and public accountability.

This Forum is designed as a platform for practical exchange and peer learning. We hope that today's discussions will help identify practical, actionable measures that support ratification and implementation of the Pandemic Agreement and advance sustainable financing solutions for health, tailored to national contexts.

Above all, this Forum reflects a broader principle: health is not only a sectoral issue. It is a foundation for human dignity, social justice, economic resilience and peace. Advancing health as a human right requires institutions that are responsive, inclusive and accountable. Parliaments are central to that mission.

Together, we have a unique opportunity to turn the lessons of recent years into lasting reforms that make the world safer, fairer and healthier for future generations.

The Forum is structured in three parts. We will begin with two technical presentations from WHO colleagues to set the scene. We will then move to parliamentary experiences, along with perspectives from civil society.

Finally, we will open the floor to interventions from parliamentarians and other stakeholders present in the room.

This session is designed to be a dialogue.

I now declare the Forum open and invite us to begin the first part of today's programme, entitled: "From Global Commitments to National Delivery: Parliamentary Action on the WHO Pandemic Agreement and Health Financing."

We will begin with keynote presentations by WHO experts to set the scene, followed by a parliamentary exchange to hear directly from members of parliament on the panel, and then we will open the floor for an interactive dialogue.

I am honoured to welcome today's distinguished speakers.

To help set the scene, we will first hear from **Dr Nedret Emiroglu**, Head of the Secretariat for the Intergovernmental Working Group on the WHO Pandemic Agreement, who will provide an update on the status of the WHO Pandemic Agreement and the central role of parliamentarians in this process.

Nedret, the floor is yours.

(...following the presentation)

Thank you very much Nedret for outlining the important next steps and emphasizing the critical role that parliamentarians will play in translating this historic agreement into national action.

Implementation of the Pandemic Agreement and stronger health systems will require not only political commitment, but also sustainable and predictable financing. Countries will need to develop tools, one of this is health taxes.

To help frame this discussion, I now have the pleasure of inviting **Dr Kalipso Chalkidou**, Director of the Department of Performance, Financing and Delivery at WHO.

Kalipso, you have the floor.

(...following the presentation)

Wrap up & Transition to Part II

Thank you very much Kalipso for highlighting the role of parliamentarians play in ensuring sustainable financing for health.

As you know, WHO and IPU have signed an MoU where the Pandemic Agreement and the issue of sustainable financing are included as key priorities of our joint work. As a follow-up to this event, we will be more than pleased to translate what was discussed today, and the decisions taken by this Assembly, into concrete initiative, so we can promote and support the engagement of parliamentarians.

We will now move into the second part of our Forum and hear directly from parliamentarians on their experiences and practical action at country level.

I am pleased to introduce Dr Zeyana Hamid, Vice Chairperson of the Committee for Health and HIV Affairs of the Parliament of Tanzania, who will be chairing the next session.

Over to you Dr. Hamid.