



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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IPU Statement

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Nutrition and Food Systems

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Excellencies,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to address this distinguished gathering on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). I am also a proud member of the SUN Movement Lead Group and I am glad to be here today with other African champions for nutrition.

Let me first thank NEPAD and the Pan-African Parliament for the invitation. As the Secretary General of the global organization of parliaments, I truly appreciate the opportunity to speak here at the seat of the Pan-African Parliament and at the beginning of this important high level event. I wish to congratulate you on a well-designed program that is filled with promising discussions on policies, frameworks and recommendations to improve nutrition and food systems for all people in Africa.

As you all know, nutrition and food security are eminently political issues. No change for the better will be felt until these issues are prioritized, adequately funded and carefully implemented. Parliamentarians hold the key to the solutions

Ladies and gentlemen,

By virtue of their constitutional powers, parliaments and parliamentarians can influence laws and policies to improve the lives of their citizens. This includes addressing the major nutrition challenges that our societies currently face.

Parliaments hold national governments accountable through their oversight function. As representatives of the people, parliamentarians have an important advocacy mission in their communities. They are the bridge between the people and the government. Last but not least, parliaments hold the power of the purse.

If fully discharged, these critical functions can ensure that parliaments and parliamentarians use their powers in the most effective way and where there is greatest need.

It is in this spirit that in early February 2017, I sent a letter to the Speakers of Parliament from the Member Countries of the SUN Movement, asking national parliaments to fully discharge their constitutional powers and take action for improved nutrition in their countries. I invited the Speakers to convene multistakeholder consultations in order to identify ways in which they can take action to support efforts to fight malnutrition and all its consequences. This action has enabled the SUN

Movement and its partners to access parliaments and start working with MPs on important issues of legislation and financing of nutrition initiatives. I have learned from our partners at the SUN Movement that this work is currently going on in 36 parliaments.

At the global level, IPU Assemblies have served as an avenue for discussion and peer learning on different issues concerning nutrition and food security. For instance, during the IPU Assembly in Dhaka in April 2017, parliamentarians from all over the world approved an emergency item on *Urgent international action to save millions of people from famine and drought in parts of Africa and Yemen* that reaffirmed, among other things, access to food as a basic human right.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Sustainable Development Goals offer the opportunity for parliaments and parliamentarians to confirm their ongoing relevance by delivering on the well-being of the people. The transformational vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on all countries and stakeholders to work together to end hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition by 2030. This ambition can only be fulfilled if food systems become sustainable, so that food supplies are stable and all people have access to adequate nutrition and health.

However, many governments, especially in low and middle-income countries, lack the resources or the political will to guarantee adequate nutrition and food systems. It is in this intersection between nutrition, food security and governance that the role of parliament comes into play, bringing enormous value.

First, parliaments and parliamentarians can advocate at various levels to elevate nutrition and food security to the top of national agendas with a view to tackling inequalities, strengthening national food systems and making sure that special attention is paid to the populations most in need.

Secondly, parliaments can and should make sure through their oversight powers that national and international commitments are turned into action through coherent, comprehensive and coordinated policies, programs and plans.

Thirdly, nutrition is dependent on many factors that fall outside of the nutrition sector. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a strong platform for parliaments to promote multisectoral coordination so that nutritional outcomes can be improved by tackling underlying determinants of malnutrition, such as poverty, food security, care for mothers and children and primary healthcare services and sanitation.

The outcome of your debate today will be very important. The IPU stands ready to help address the identified challenges and opportunities, take further the collaboration with key partners and provide support to national parliaments on the SDGs and other important issues for the future of the African continent.

Ladies and gentlemen, please accept my best wishes for successful deliberations.