



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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IPU Statement

Martin Chungong
Secretary General

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Madam President,
My dear friend and brother,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure once again to address this global gathering of health leaders. I bring to you the greetings of the world's 46 000 Parliamentarians.

My presence here today is testimony to the strong commitment of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the world organization of parliaments to, robust engagement of parliaments in efforts to improve health outcomes for the world's people.

I am pleased that Director General Tedros, shares our vision for strong parliaments working with the health constituency in order to achieve better health. The MOU I was pleased to sign with him last October on behalf of our two organizations, is evidence of our shared commitment to this noble cause.

I am heartened by the focus of this 72nd Assembly on universal health coverage which happens to be the centerpiece of the IPU's endeavours in the health sector and of the MOU I have just mentioned.

Indeed, the IPU continues to be dedicated to pursuing efforts that mobilize parliaments worldwide in support of the rights and needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Our longstanding partnership with WHO has contributed to advancing the objectives of the global health agenda and to strengthening the role of parliaments in accountability.

However, as I am sure you will agree with me, far too many people still do not enjoy the right to health. That is why we continue to encourage parliaments to use their constitutional powers to make that difference and plug the gaps in access to health. For instance, we want parliaments to address the social and economic barriers that restrict access to health care by putting in place robust legal frameworks, by promoting and protecting human rights, and by monitoring the impact of laws and policies. Budget appropriations for interventions targeting the most vulnerable and marginalized populations are also instrumental in ensuring that resources are allocated where they are needed the most and that they contribute to improving equity in access to essential health care services.

By representing the people, parliamentarians also voice the needs and concerns of communities and citizens, playing a key role in ensuring that "no one is left behind". In view of improved accountability and transparency, parliaments can involve and coordinate action of all those stakeholders concerned with implementing legislation – law enforcers, health care providers, social workers, civil society and grassroots organizations, as well as religious and community leaders.

I am therefore pleased to inform you that the IPU is currently working on a resolution on “Achieving Universal Health Coverage by 2030: the role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health”. This will be the first global parliamentary resolution on UHC and it will identify concrete parliamentary actions for the achievement of UHC. The resolution is set for adoption in October this year. WHO is playing a lead role in the process by providing invaluable assistance to the rapporteurs of the resolution who happen to be attending this World Health Assembly.

Tomorrow, WHO and the IPU are organizing a technical briefing at 12:30 in Room XVI. This high profile event is being organized for the second consecutive year at the WHA. Within the context of the development of the IPU resolution on UHC, the technical briefing will provide an opportunity to discuss key issues in relation to UHC and the significance of parliamentary action in this area, and will promote collaboration between parliamentarians and other health actors to advance the global health agenda. I hope that we will see as many participants there as possible. Indeed, a strong partnership between Parliamentarians and other health leaders, notably ministers of health, is crucial to the achievement of health for all.

Together with WHO, we hope that the adoption of a parliamentary resolution by IPU Member Parliaments and the adoption of a political declaration by UN Member States at the upcoming United Nations High-Level Meeting on UHC will provide a clear signal of the centrality of the UHC agenda not only for health, but also for equity, development, social inclusion and cohesion. A strong message on the importance of a robust partnership between the two constituencies would provide a clear mandate for our continuing to work together in our common endeavour of promoting access to all and leaving no one behind.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you all to strengthen your efforts to achieve UHC and to work with your parliaments to support this process.

The IPU will continue to work with WHO to strengthen the capacities of parliaments so that they can make full use of their legislative, budgetary and oversight functions for improved access to health care services for all.

Thank you.