



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Webinar

Universal health coverage in times of COVID-19 – Parliamentary best practices and challenges

17 November 2020
1.30-3.00 p.m. GMT+1

Registration: [https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0pduitrDMtHdlk3Hc_vEUhnTx3HyxLYejM](https://zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tJ0pduitrDMtHdlk3Hc_vEUhnTx3HyxLYejM)

Concept note

Background

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is aimed at providing every person equal access to quality health services as required without causing financial hardships. However, more than half of the world population still does not have access to essential health services, with up to five billion people projected to lack access by 2030. The current COVID-19 crisis has further strained health systems across the world and exacerbated inequalities putting vulnerable populations at an increased risk. Now more than ever, it is crucial that countries prioritize UHC to build stronger health systems with a well-resourced health workforce and address barriers to access to health for all. UHC reaffirms the right to health as a fundamental human right and can make the difference to countries' responses to COVID-19 and the prevention and response to outbreaks of diseases.

At the 141st IPU Assembly in 2019, a landmark resolution entitled *Achieving universal health coverage by 2030: The role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health* was adopted by the IPU's 179 Member Parliaments calling for parliaments to take all legal and policy measures to achieve UHC. The resolution recognizes the connection between global health security and UHC and provides a road map for parliaments to accelerate progress towards UHC. It follows the Political Declaration adopted by United Nations Member States at the seventy-fourth session of the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC in September 2019.

The IPU Advisory Group on Health guides parliaments in implementing international commitments on health. Following the adoption of the IPU resolution on UHC, the Advisory Group acts as a global focal point for parliamentary accountability in implementing the resolution to take stock of steps taken by parliaments towards UHC and share best practices and recommendations with the global parliamentary community. It is proposed to organize a webinar as a first step within this accountability framework.

Content and objectives

This webinar will assess the progress towards UHC made by parliaments, and common challenges in accelerating these efforts. Given the current pandemic, topics of discussion will include how to prioritize UHC in the COVID-19 response and recovery, as well as examples on how UHC supports emergency preparedness and response.

The webinar will provide parliaments with an overview of UHC and on how efforts towards UHC are being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also provide a space for an exchange on parliamentary

approaches and action on UHC in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, to deliberate on country experiences, and identify good practices to strengthen parliamentary action at the national level.

Structure:

Duration: 1 hour 30 mins:

- Welcome remarks from the Chair of the IPU Advisory Group on Health
- Expert presentation on UHC and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Two parliaments presenting their respective country's experience and actions taken to improve access to health and the role of UHC in their COVID-19 responses
- Interactive discussion
- Closing remarks

Participation

Participation will be open to all parliaments and include the IPU Advisory Group on Health members and its technical partners.

The languages of the webinar will be English and French.

Follow up

The IPU Advisory Group on Health will prepare a report on good practices and challenges shared during the webinar. The report will include recommendations to strengthen parliamentary action on UHC. This information will feed into an annual summary to be prepared by the Advisory Group where it will take stock of different national experiences and identify lessons learnt and challenges in the implementation of the IPU resolution on UHC.

Parliaments will be invited to share feedback through an online survey on the webinar and areas of interest in relation to UHC. The results of the survey will enable the IPU to inform future activities on health issues.

Parliaments will also have the possibility to submit written inputs after the webinar highlighting their country experiences on the topics under discussion.

IPU Advisory Group on Health

The IPU Advisory Group on Health supports the implementation by parliaments of relevant international commitments by focusing on inequalities and discrimination that stand in the way of universal access to health services and prevention. Following the meeting of the Group in October 2019, the accountability framework for the IPU resolution on UHC was finalized. Given the current pandemic, the activities envisaged in the framework are being adapted to a virtual format. This webinar is the first such activity, and members and technical partners of the Group are invited to engage in this event and share their comments and recommendations to inform the webinar report.