

140th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly
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IPU General Assembly debate

Honorable President of the IPU, dear Secretary General,

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The World Health Organization is honored to contribute on the theme of “Parliaments as platforms to enhance education for peace, security and the rule of law”.

Investments in education and health help to prevent conflicts and wars. The education and health sectors suffer together in wars. Too frequently, the tragedy of war creates the perfect conditions for health system disruption, including also the possibility for diseases to spread. When health infrastructure is damaged or destroyed; when health workers are targeted and killed; when essential medicines cannot get through to the people who need them most, the world’s defenses start to crumble.

The 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa has heavily destabilized the three most affected countries. One of the key reason for that perfect storm with the lack of health personnel based on the lack of investment in education. A perfect example how investments in education and health must go hand in hand to prevent conflicts.

Pandemics, health emergencies and weak health systems, and lack of education and training of health workers, not only cost lives but pose

some of the greatest risks to the global economy and security faced today.

And too often the most precious resource, health workforce, is lacking, especially in context of emergencies, conflicts and crisis.

Without urgent action, the world faces a projected shortfall of 18 million health workers by 2030.

This will jeopardise progress towards universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals, but more importantly, it will jeopardise the health of people, particularly those who are already vulnerable.

The health workforce crisis has disastrous implications for the health and well-being of millions of people, but at the same time also for the security.

War, emergencies, conflicts increase the risk of health system disruption, and at the same time lack of access to health services increase the risk of social instability.

For this reason investing in education of health workforce represents a double investment with high returns both in terms of health, economy and security and peace.

In this sense, education and health are the two cornerstones of human development, and the two best investments in human capital.

And WHO itself has decided to invest in education.

The World Health Organization is working on an initiative aimed at the establishment of a “WHO” Academy to massively accelerate the

development of competencies needed in a rapidly changing context to achieve health for all by 2030.

The Academy will bring together the best of evidence, adult learning science and learning technologies to address the unmet demand for accessible, accredited, innovative and transformative competency development for 10 million by 2023, including onsite training for 60,000.

It will target WHO staff, leaders, managers, researchers, health workers and community organizers in the public and private sector operating in countries committed to progressing health related SDGs in and beyond the health sector.

Parliamentary support to bring this ambitious and important initiative to fruition is pivotal and welcome. And most importantly your voice is crucial to advocate for increased investment in health and education: a triple dividend for healthier people, increased security and human development.

I wish you every success and look forward to working with you very closely.

I thank you.