



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
for democrats. For everyone.

## IPU STATEMENT

Dr. Faustine Ndugulile MP  
Vice-Chair, IPU Advisory  
Group on HIV/AIDS-MNCH

Consultation on the UNSG's  
Global Strategy on Women's,  
Children's and Adolescents' Health

Johannesburg, 7 May 2015

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to report to you the outcome of the Parliamentary Session. The session brought together parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from across Africa. We were pleased to learn about the outcomes of the consultations with parliamentarians held at the 132<sup>nd</sup> IPU Assembly in Hanoi and we factored them into our deliberations. A comparative study of five parliaments implementing the 2012 IPU Resolution *Access to health as a basic right: The role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing the health of women and children*, prepared by WHO and IPU, provided additional insights into the important work that parliaments are doing in this area and it further helped inform our discussions on the Global Strategy.

Parliament is the key institution of accountability in each country, mandated by law or Constitution to conduct oversight of all organs of state. Its responsibility is to keep the executive to account for commitments made at national, regional and global levels and make sure that government action makes a difference in the lives of ordinary people, especially the most marginalized. Mobilization of parliaments in all countries is therefore central to ensure accountability for commitments made through the new Global Strategy.

We have seen over the last few years, particularly through the IPU and its Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, that mobilization of strong political commitment and leadership from parliaments can contribute to accelerated progress and promotion of even greater commitment for the health and wellbeing of women and children. Results of IPU's work have been reported annually through the independent Expert Review Group and they received wide recognition. The Parliamentary Session therefore noted with disappointment that the current draft of the Global Strategy does not make reference to parliaments. We very much hope that this will be corrected and that the next draft will recognize parliaments as a key stakeholder.

In addition to keeping the executive to account, parliaments have the power to legislate and ensure that enabling laws and policies are passed to advance progress on women's, children's and adolescents' health. They approve budgets proposed by the executive and can ensure, like in the example we heard yesterday from Uganda, that adequate funding accompanies commitments and programs on women's and children's health. Finally, as representatives of the people parliamentarians can engage with their constituents to increase their knowledge of factors that impede progress on women's, children's and adolescents' health and can provide direct

access of citizens to decision making. As such, parliaments can be important agents of change.

The IPU has given a significant contribution in the last few years to help most affected countries make advances on MDGs 4 and 5 and accelerate progress. It did so because in recent times parliaments around the world have increasingly sought advice about how to modernize their legislation, involve citizens and health workers, and effectively fulfil their prerogatives of law-making, oversight, representation and budget appropriation. As a result, a number of parliaments that have received support from IPU have managed to elevate the issue to the top of the political agenda and make strong contribution to improving women's and children's health in their countries.

Despite this progress, the Parliamentary Session noted with concern that the capacities in many parliaments to engage on issues linked to women's, children's and adolescents' health remain limited. Continued and long-term focus on parliaments is needed to build this capacity and see results. We therefore call for support to IPU and parliaments to strengthen their efforts to improve capacities and competencies in parliaments to engage on issues linked to women's, children's and adolescents' health. This should include all functions of parliaments: legislative, oversight, budgetary and representative. We are aware that engaging with parliaments may take time but we reassure you that it is a worthwhile investment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Parliamentarians want to have a Global Strategy that will be our road map on how to enhance budgetary allocations, strengthen laws and policies and improve service on the ground for the most vulnerable women, adolescents and children. IPU is committed to continue providing support to parliamentary efforts within the context the new Global Strategy. Its member parliaments have already proved their commitment. Continued assistance from the international community for the vital parliamentary work is essential and it would help make a giant leap forward on a fundamental precondition for development.

We want parliaments to play a role in accountability at all levels and we want our input to feed into implementation mechanisms for the new Global Strategy. It is therefore imperative that parliaments be represented in the future global structure on accountability for commitments made in the Global Strategy. During the implementation of the current Global Strategy, IPU successfully unveiled the potential of parliaments in dealing effectively with the issue and fed the results into global reporting progress. Parliaments should therefore be represented in this future mechanism by their global organization – the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Official representation of parliaments in the global mechanism would also help strengthen linkages between parliaments and other stakeholders - civil society, media, international organizations, etc. This interaction is vital to further strengthen partnerships, ensure greater impact, align national, regional and global efforts and help parliaments play an informed and effective role in accountability for commitments.

Allow me to conclude by highlighting once again recommendations from the Parliamentary Session to the new Global Strategy:

- The Global Strategy should recognize parliaments as a key stakeholder.
- All efforts should be made to strengthen capacity of parliaments to ensure accountability and exercise their function in the context of the Global Strategy.
- IPU should be invited to represent parliaments in the future global accountability mechanism for women's, children's and adolescents' health.

Thank you.