



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Statement before the Third Committee of the General Assembly

Agenda item 65: Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child

Introduced by Mr. Alessandro Motter, Senior Advisor

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CHECK AGAINST
DELIVERY

Chairperson,

The rights of women and children are a primary concern for the IPU and **many members of parliament** (MPs) around the world. In fact, some 52% of MPs surveyed in an IPU study on the Millennium Development Goals pinpointed the health related goals 4, 5 and 6 as the greatest challenge to their parliaments.

As we know, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child established that children have a basic right to accessible, affordable, and good quality health services. This right is reinforced by various UN resolutions, including those of the Human Rights Council on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity. In compliance with these norms, today the constitutions **of many** countries contain provisions on health and health care. But as important as that is, it is not enough: the challenge now is to ensure that women and children are **aware** of these rights, that legal barriers are removed and that adequate resources are allocated to facilitate the **realization** of these rights.

All of this speaks directly to the role of parliaments, as we have heard at several points during this long debate. Parliaments represent citizens, shape policies, make laws, approve budgets and hold the executive to account. These are all **vital** components of the concerted action needed to make sure that women and children enjoy their right to good health.

To help mobilize parliaments around these rights, the IPU organizes training workshops and seminars for members of parliament, disseminates information, and provides support for national initiatives on women's and children's health. Our goal is to ensure the establishment of appropriate legal frameworks, to bring about more accountability and transparency in the use of resources, and to provide universal access to health services by all women and children.

It is **gratifying** to see that a growing number of parliaments are setting up parliamentary initiatives to oversee government action in meeting its commitments on women's and children's access to health -- **as a right**. This often involves establishing committees and caucuses on women and children with a strong focus on health. It also involves the endorsement by parliaments of strong global commitments to achieving MDGs 4 and 5 such as the *Bern Initiative for Global Parliamentary Action on Maternal and Child Health*, which was established by Women Speakers of Parliament in 2010.

The signatories of the *Bern Initiative* committed to eight broad objectives, including:

- supporting the three pillars of maternal and newborn health, **namely** family planning, skilled care during delivery, and emergency care;
- holding debates in parliament on women's and children's health **before** the national budget is drafted and submitted to parliament for adoption;
- commissioning reports on the impact the budget will have on the achievement of MDGs 4 and 5;
- monitoring the implementation of the budget **from the perspective** of MDGs 4 and 5 on the basis of **appropriate data** about maternal and child health;
- and holding public hearings in parliament -- with the participation of women and children -- to assess the impact of health legislation, policies and budgets.

The IPU is also mobilizing support among its members for the UN-led Global Strategy on Women's and Children's Health. In follow up to this strategy, the IPU has launched a parliamentary dialogue which will culminate in a resolution recommending parliamentary action in support of women's and children's health. The resolution, to be finalised early next year, will contain a catalogue of measures which parliaments can take to improve women's and children's health significantly, including allocating adequate funding, revising national health policies and overseeing improved service delivery.

Thank you for your attention.