



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the Special Session on Children

Statement by Ambassador Anda Filip
Permanent Observer

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Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

Please allow me to begin by joining previous speakers in extending our profound condolences to the people and Government of Algeria, to the broader United Nations family, and to the families of the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Algiers, which the Inter-Parliamentary Union strongly condemns.

Providing education for all children, protecting them against abuse, exploitation and violence, promoting health and combating HIV/AIDS are principles on which there is an international consensus. These are also important areas of activity for the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We believe that by working collectively through and with parliaments and their members, child protection can be improved and the rights of children better promoted.

The IPU has strongly supported the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We have also consistently encouraged parliamentary action in implementing the Declaration and the Plan of Action entitled "A World Fit for Children".

Indeed, parliaments and their members have a particular responsibility towards the fulfillment of the rights of children. Parliaments are called upon to ratify international conventions and agreements, they legislate, adopt budgets, oversee the action of government, and help build popular support for further action – all of these components are essential for tackling the many problems currently faced by children around the world.

Over the past five years, in recognition of the unique role played by parliaments and their members, the IPU has developed numerous activities in the field of child protection, and much of this has been conducted in close cooperation with UNICEF. Common efforts have followed a two-tiered strategy aimed at, first, raising awareness amongst parliaments of child protection issues in general and secondly, addressing specific child protection and child rights themes warranting parliamentary action, such as female genital mutilation, child labor, and trafficking of children. Activities carried out have included the production of several handbooks for parliamentarians on child protection, violence against children, trafficking of children, as well as the provision of technical support to parliaments and their members to bring about change for children back at home, at the national and local levels.

The strategic partnership developed with UNICEF has been very effective. One of the most striking results is that child protection issues have gained ground at the IPU and have become a recurrent and systematic theme at our annual assemblies; it is also mainstreamed in much of the work of the IPU.

The most recent example relates to a conference held two weeks ago in Manila on HIV/AIDS. Working in close collaboration with UNDP and the Secretariat of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS, the IPU held the First Global Parliamentary Meeting on AIDS. It was the first time that parliaments from all over the world convened to jointly discuss the role that they have to play in responding to HIV/AIDS. It was agreed that parliamentarians need to be more assertive as leaders in grappling with the pandemic, and initiate and promote a rights-based response to HIV/AIDS. It was also agreed that special attention should be given to vulnerable populations, such as children.

During the meeting, the IPU took the opportunity to launch a new handbook for parliamentarians entitled "Taking action against HIV". This handbook will serve as a tool for parliamentary leadership on this issue and a reference book to assist legislators and their staff to undertake relevant action.

At the meeting, the need to tailor national budgets to effectively tackle the problem of HIV/AIDS was high on the agenda. These last years have witnessed a significant growth in financial resources available to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic in low and middle income countries. Nevertheless, the IPU is concerned that these resources remain much below the amounts required to conduct comprehensive programmes. In this regard, the IPU calls on the international community to step up its efforts to increase funding.

The IPU's commitment to the welfare of children and the protection of their rights is long standing. In the first half of next year, IPU will be contributing to a global Forum entitled *Countdown to 2015 – Tracking Progress in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health*. The Forum, scheduled to take place in Cape Town South Africa in April 2008, will bring together a large coalition of actors – including WHO, UNICEF, academics, international NGOs such as Save the Children and representatives of the multilateral donor community.

The Forum will aim to promote the achievement of the two Millennium Development Goals that relate to maternal and child health. In turn, this event will add political content to the 118th IPU Assembly that will be taking place at the same time, and will seek to mobilize parliaments in support of the implementation of the MDGs.

Mr. President,

The IPU will continue to build the capacities of parliaments to advocate for and critically examine national budget allocations in relation to the welfare of children, as well as assisting with new legislation focusing on the needs of children. We will also continue to provide support to parliament for the monitoring of respect for children's rights, and for raising awareness among MPs on broader child welfare issues such as education and health. We look forward to continuing to pursue the goals of a rejuvenated agenda and to ensuring that our world is indeed fit for children.

Thank you for your attention.