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Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(c) Parliamentary Meeting at the 70th World Health Assembly Geneva (Switzerland), 29 May 2017

Under the sponsorship of Austria, Bangladesh and Cameroon, the IPU and the World Health Organization (WHO) organized the side event on *Bridging the gap between evidence and policy: The role of Parliamentarians in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The side event took place in Geneva (Switzerland) on 29 May 2017 during the 70th World Health Assembly. It was the second event of its kind and it was held in recognition of the commitment of parliaments and parliamentarians to promote health and well-being at both the national and global levels.

The event brought together members of parliaments, representatives of civil society, scientists and WHO staff who discussed ways to integrate research findings into policy and legislation. The event highlighted steps that parliaments can take to become agents of change through their key roles in helping to pass legislation and budgets and oversee government action. It also underlined the importance of using the latest scientific evidence to inform parliamentarians' health-related priorities and actions.

In his welcome remarks, the IPU Secretary General highlighted the importance of the IPU's partnership with the WHO in efforts to support parliaments in translating scientific evidence into legislation and policy. He pointed out that health had gained in prominence on the IPU's agenda over the past 10 years and that the new IPU Strategy for 2017-2021 includes strong focus on health and well-being.

Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General, lauded the ongoing collaboration between the two organizations. She highlighted the centrality of the IPU as a key organization to help support transpose science into policy and legislation.

Panellists agreed that nowadays there was a lot of resistance, in addition to myths and misconceptions, on some of the key health issues such as vaccines and sexual and reproductive health of women and girls. They highlighted the power and moral authority of parliamentarians to counter those arguments and be champions of evidence-informed policy. Given their proximity to the people, parliamentarians had an important role in facilitating dialogue and understanding, which were prerequisites for effective use of science in health policy and practice. They highlighted the importance of the IPU-WHO partnership as a channel of information and evidence from the research community to parliaments.

At the event, parliamentarians shared examples of bold action they had taken to address myths and misconceptions surrounding certain health issues. They stressed the importance of parliamentarians being part and parcel of the global discussion on health.

Parliamentarians also commended the IPU and WHO for the organization of the second Parliamentary Meeting and requested that the event become a regular feature at World Health Assemblies in the future.



#IPU137