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World Health Organization



Ending AIDS through improving sexual and reproductive health: the need for urgent parliamentary action

Interactive session at the 137th IPU Assembly

Sunday, 15 October 2017

1 to 2.30 p.m.

Reading Room (ground floor), Tavrishesky Palace, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation

A light lunch will be served

In spite of significant recent achievements, the AIDS epidemic remains a serious social, human and development challenge. Efforts to end AIDS and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are closely linked. In order to support action on HIV/AIDS as a key development challenge, SDG 3 on health contains a target to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

The majority of HIV infections today are sexually transmitted or associated with reproductive health outcomes (pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding). In addition, sexual and reproductive ill-health and HIV/AIDS share root causes, including poverty, gender inequality and social marginalization of the most vulnerable populations, and especially women and girls. Harmful and discriminatory laws and practices often prevent adolescents, women and men from obtaining essential HIV and sexual and reproductive health information and services. Stigma, discrimination and service provider bias additionally limit their ability, as well as that of sex workers and women who inject drugs, to access counselling, prevention and treatment.

Where parliamentarians are capacitated and effectively engaged in sexual and reproductive health and the HIV response, they can become critical leaders who are able to take forward a new vision for health that leaves no one behind and push for policy changes and resource allocations where needed. Parliamentarians can generate dialogue aimed at breaking taboos, increasing understanding and acceptance, and guaranteeing non-discrimination. They can also create legal frameworks and address the legal and policy barriers to critical sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention and treatment. Finally, Members of Parliament can be powerful agents for accountability and for sufficient investment of domestic resources for sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

The parliamentarians attending the session will be invited to discuss the following key questions:

- What can parliaments do to make sure that access to HIV and sexual and reproductive health services remains a national political and sustainable financing priority?
- What actions can parliamentarians take to ensure that programmes, information and services reach and work for the marginalized and vulnerable populations?
- What policy approaches have the greatest impact in maximizing access to integrated HIV and sexual and reproductive health services? What good practices can be shared to effectively counter stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health?
- What arguments should be used to convince those who are still uncertain about the need to address HIV and sexual and reproductive health jointly that it is a priority in reaching the SDGs?
- How can HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) capacities and systems be used to address other eliminable diseases such as TB, hepatitis, etc?