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High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS

Round –Table on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights with an emphasis on Gender

2 June 2005

*Intervention by Ambassador Anda FILIP
Permanent observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the United Nations*

I would like to take this opportunity to make some observations regarding the parliamentary perspective on the issue under consideration by this round table. I would begin by saying that this is a very theme that over recent years has warranted a lot of attention both within the Inter-Parliamentary Union as well as within its member Parliaments.

Most recently at its 112th Assembly, held in early April this year in Manila (Philippines) the IPU Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights adopted by consensus a resolution entitled "*The Role of Parliaments in advocating and enforcing observance of human rights in the strategies for the prevention, management and treatment of the HIV/AIDS pandemic*". It's a comprehensive and substantive document that we encourage all of you to read, and basically it sets forth the guidelines for action by parliaments in building an enabling environment (through legislation, policies, and adequate budgeting) to effectively address many of the concerns raised here today.

I will not go into the details, but just mention – as way of example – some of the main guidelines for action:

- ensuring that laws, policies and practices respect human rights in the context of HIV/AIDS, in particular the rights to education, work, privacy, protection and access to care, treatment and social services;
- encouraging the periodic establishment of national and regional reports to take stock of progress towards meeting the MDGs, in particular in the field of the fight against HIV/AIDS;
- developing and implementing national legislation and policies that address the needs and human rights of the growing number of children orphaned and made vulnerable by the HIV/AIDS pandemic;

- reviewing and adjusting legislation to ensure that it conforms to the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights (back in 1999, IPU in cooperation with UNAIDS published a *Handbook for Legislators on HIV/AIDS, Law and Human Rights*, designed especially to assist in this process);
- promoting appropriate legislative measures to tackle discrimination against persons affected by HIV/AIDS and to contribute to the creation of a social environment of tolerance and human solidarity, indispensable for the prevention of this terrible disease and for assisting those affected by it;
- promoting an effective and efficient use of resources for HIV/AIDS response, including by means of country-level coordination that takes into consideration the UNAIDS "Three Ones" guiding principles for national authorities and their partners;
- creating parliamentary committees and/or other structures formally linked to parliaments with the specific task of tackling the issue of halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, to share experiences, information and best practices and to involve all sectors of society through partnership programmes in high-level decision-making processes;
- ensuring the development and accelerated implementation of national strategies for women's empowerment, inter alia by ensuring they have access to property rights, by promoting and protecting women's full enjoyment of all human rights and by reducing their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS through the elimination of all forms of discrimination, as well as all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful traditional and customary practices, abuse, rape and other forms of sexual violence (host of other recommendations for action with a special focus on gender, ranging from implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, to concrete efforts aimed at gender budgeting within public institutions).

In conclusion, IPU would like to continue to work in partnership with you and all other stakeholders throughout this process. To this end, we have envisaged the establishment of a global focus – in the form of an international parliamentary select committee - for policy and information to promote and facilitate parliamentary action to combat the AIDS pandemic. This would seek to:

- provide advice and support to national parliamentary committees addressing HIV/AIDS issues;
- help in related legislative activities, including by developing model legislation;
- facilitate exchanges of experiences between parliaments and their members;
- foster policy development; and
- generally provide advice on AIDS-related issues to inter-parliamentary structures.

I thank you for your attention.