



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Launch of the IPU-WHO handbook “Strengthening health security
preparedness: The International Health Regulations (2005)”

Nusa Dua, 24 March 2022

Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Throughout this Assembly we have been discussing the need to take urgent action on climate change. As you know, tackling climate change will have benefits for our planet and our health, including decreasing the risk for infectious disease emergence. However, to avoid the next pandemic, action on many fronts is required and we need to start preparing without delay. The consequences of the lack of preparedness are in front of our eyes every day and we cannot allow such a crisis to happen again.

For many years, the IPU has been working closely with the World Health Organization to bring the scientific and the parliamentary communities closer together and to support parliamentarians in ensuring all can have access to health services. Already in 2018, we have broadened our collaboration to encompass universal health coverage and global health security. This forward-looking partnership has enabled us to react quickly at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide parliamentarians with the latest information at key stages of the pandemic.

I am proud to be here today to launch a new joint handbook on strengthening health security preparedness. The handbook aims to raise awareness on the existing international instrument, the International Health Regulations, which contain provisions to ensure all countries have the capacity to detect and respond to health threats.

In 2019, IPU Member Parliaments adopted a landmark resolution on universal health coverage. The resolution recognizes the connection between global health security and universal health coverage, calling on parliaments to take all possible measures to prevent the spread of diseases and other public health events. This handbook is therefore an essential tool to equip parliaments to implement the resolution. It provides different options for you to engage in your countries to pass legislation, back it with resources for implementation, and oversee health emergency plans. This is not about COVID-19 – The next health emergency could come from a very different type of pathogen. We therefore need to be prepared to face different forms of health risks and prevent them from becoming pandemics.

I invite you to visit the IPU website to download a copy of the handbook. I hope you will find it useful and that it will support you in your efforts to make our communities and countries safer. For us, this is only the first step, and with WHO we remain committed to help empowering you and your parliaments in this critical area of health and development.