



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Speaking notes

Mr. Martin Chungong
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Sustainable preparedness for health security and
resilience: Adopting a whole-of-society approach
and breaking the panic-then-forget cycle

1 October 2020, 1.00 – 2.30 p.m. CEST

Honorable Ministers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be part of this important event, and I wish to thank our partners at WHO for inviting me.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the importance of multisectoral preparedness. It is precisely at the intersection between health, security and governance that parliaments come into play. They can and must advocate the elevation emergency preparedness to the top of national agendas with a view to strengthening health systems and ensuring investments in health security. Through their legislative powers, they can make sure that instruments such as the International Health Regulations are turned into action in countries, while promoting multisectoral coordination and policy coherence.

It is also clear that preparedness has to be sustainable. The IPU campaign “Parliaments in a time of pandemic” is collecting information to help share good practices and draw lessons for future parliamentary response. We are for example learning that some parliaments are looking into their government’s response to the pandemic to enhance emergency preparedness: the French Senate is creating an enquiry committee to evaluate public policies for pandemics ; and Canada is setting up a Special Senate Committee on the Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic and Future Preparedness.

The IPU and WHO have been collaborating to build a bridge between the parliamentary community and the scientific health community. The two organizations have identified global health security as a priority area, and we have further strengthened our collaboration during the pandemic. In particular, our new handbook for parliamentarians will provide guidance on necessary legislative and budgetary reforms to support the implementation of the International Health Regulations, and how to build accountability through oversight of government action.

Together with WHO, we will also support national parliaments in strengthening their capacities to deal with health security and in particular preparedness to protect people from health emergencies.

The IPU remains committed to working with WHO and parliaments worldwide to ensure that this pandemic marks a turning point in emergency preparedness.