



**Webinar:
Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic: parliamentary action to reduce risks, strengthen emergency preparedness and increase resilience**

28 April 2020, 14h00 Geneva, 19h00 Bangkok, 21h00 Seoul

Concept note

BACKGROUND

The spread of COVID-19 worldwide reveals the challenges of managing health risks and effects of all types of emergencies. All countries, regardless of income or level of development, face systemic risks, such as those associated with disease outbreaks, with the potential for very significant health and socio-economic impacts. Beyond the current COVID-19 pandemic, the risk of future epidemics and other health emergencies remains high for communities and countries worldwide.

A range of international instruments and frameworks exist to support countries in managing these risks. In particular, the International Health Regulations (2005) establish rights and obligations for State Parties and for the World Health Organization (WHO), the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030¹, including legislative and administrative arrangements in areas of emergency preparedness and response, and the development of minimum public health capacities for surveillance, assessment, response and reporting of health threats. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030², which provides concrete actions to protect development gains from the risk of disaster due to biological, natural and technological hazards, also includes a focus on resilient health systems.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need to scale up efforts to strengthen country capacities across all sectors. Parliaments play a key role in implementing existing instruments and mitigating risks and impacts through enacting necessary legislative reforms, ensuring public health systems and research institutes are adequately funded, and building accountability through oversight of government emergency management policies and programmes. Parliaments also have a critical role in ensuring a multisectoral approach for emergency management for the risks that countries face and optimizing opportunities for applying the principle of “building back better” to reduce the risks of future events during the recovery from this pandemic.

Building on the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) will collaborate with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in organizing a webinar for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff on the role of parliaments in health security, emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction. It will be part of the UNDRR-WHO webinar series on COVID-19.

The webinar is part of the series initiated by UNDRR Incheon Office with WHO, and supported by UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. It will build on ongoing collaboration of WHO and the IPU. As part of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2018 and related joint workplan, the IPU and WHO are working together to reinforce the role of parliaments in strengthening global health security. As part of these efforts, a handbook to enhance the knowledge in parliaments on global health security and the implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) will be jointly produced. The IPU also regularly works together with UNDRR to increase parliamentary action to meet national

¹ https://www.who.int/hac/events/2016/Bangkok_Principles.pdf

² https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordren.pdf

disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation needs. A current example of this collaboration is the joint development of an advocacy toolkit on DRR.

CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES

The webinar aims to use the COVID-19 pandemic as an example to discuss how parliaments can enhance their role on prevention and in emergency preparedness through a whole-of-society approach, and contribute in mitigating risks, reduce vulnerabilities of communities, and protect populations from future emergencies. The webinar will focus on COVID-19 pandemic preparedness and response to provide parliamentarians and parliamentary staff with an overview of the current status of the pandemic and its cascading risks and consequences for a country, including the impacts beyond the health sector. The webinar will also draw lessons learnt and best practices from this emergency to reflect on how to ensure enhanced disaster risk management including preventive measures and preparedness for effective response to pandemics in the future.

Target audience:

The target audience includes parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from all regions.

Speakers:

Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Ms. Mami Mizutori, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, and head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General

Dr. Michael Ryan, Executive Director, WHO Health Emergencies Programme;

Dr. Maria d Vankerkhov, WHO Technical Lead for COVID-19

Ms. Loretta Hieber-Girardet, Chief of UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (Moderator)

Organizers

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

World Health Organization (WHO)

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Global Education and Training Institute (GETI) and Regional Office for Asia-Pacific.

Agenda:

The webinar will last for 1 hour:

- Opening – IPU, WHO, UNDRR (10 min)
- Presentation: Overview on COVID-19 – WHO (15 min)
- Parliamentarian's perspective on COVID-19 (5 min)
- Q&A (25 min)
- Key messages – IPU, WHO, UNDRR (4 min)
- Wrap up – Moderator (1 min)

For more information: Ana Cristina Thorlund, UNDRR Office for Northeast Asia (ONEA) and Global Education and Training Institute (GETI) at undrr-incheon@un.org



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