

# Parliamentarians discuss issues around HIV and AIDS

During the XVIII International AIDS Conference held in Vienna, Austria, from 18–23 July 2010, members and staff of parliament from 47 countries met on 20 July to discuss legislative aspects of HIV relating to key affected populations. The meeting was organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Parliament of Austria. The discussion focused on how to strike a balance between criminal law and public health in the field of HIV and AIDS so that both could function as effectively as possible. Specific emphasis was on testing and HIV virus transmission modes (sexual, intravenous and vertical, ie from parent to child). The meeting further discussed human rights concerns associated with interventions to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The following agreements were reached:

Members of parliament agreed that laws exclusively criminalizing the transmission of HIV constitute a violation of the right not to be discriminated against, further stigmatize persons living with HIV and create a false sense of security. Instead of criminalizing HIV transmission, parliaments should examine and audit the laws that already exist and that are or can be applied in the context of HIV. Members of parliament agreed that interventions to prevent transmission from mother to child are the most cost-effective way to remove one mode of HIV transmission. They endorsed the international community call to eliminate vertical transmission of the HIV virus by 2015 and pledged to support this as a goal in their countries (IPU website).

For further information, visit the IPU website at <http://www.ipu.org/news-e/latest.htm> or <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/aids10.htm>.