

NIIGATA DECLARATION

The 6th General Assembly

Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

5th October 1999

Okura Hotel Niigata

Niigata City, Japan

Preamble

1. We, the 96 parliamentarians from 28 countries,¹ meeting in Niigata, Japan, on the eve of the Day of 6 Billion and of the next millennium to reflect on the results of the ICPD + 5, renew our commitment to population and development. The Asian population now represents 61 per cent of the world population. Therefore, the world of the next millennium will in great part depend on the population-related decisions taken by Asian Governments, parliamentarians and the people.

2. Since its establishment in 1981, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) has been a leader in raising awareness of, and advocating for, population and development issues and activities in the region and beyond. It has contributed significantly to the establishment of many fora of parliamentarians on population and development in other regions, including Africa and Arab States, and in organizing the landmark International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, and the International Forum of Parliamentarians on ICPD Review in The Hague, 1999.

3. In recent decades, Asia has seen much progress. Yet this region is the one where the trends have been most diverse and diverging. Indeed, Asia includes countries which are developed, developing, and in transition. Asian countries have suffered from the recent economic crisis or are in the midst of major reforms. While some have an abundance of natural resources, water and food, others cannot feed their populations or meet their basic needs. All these countries have different

¹ These 28 countries include the following members, associate members and observers: Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, China, Fiji, Ghana, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Solomon Islands, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Zambia.

demographic dynamics and must address these in relation to their own specific economic and social realities.

Asia is characterized both by populations with rapid demographic changes and populations growing at, or below, replacement level; youthful populations and rapidly aging populations; countries with high or rapidly increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS and countries where only a few cases have been diagnosed. Most countries are facing challenging migratory patterns, especially toward the cities. Great differences are also found in the level of education of women, of infant and maternal mortality, of adolescent fertility, and in access to quality reproductive health information and services, and life expectancy.

Call for Action

5. We reaffirm the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development adopted by parliamentarians on the eve of the ICPD. We welcome the ICPD+5 process, including the International Forum of Parliamentarians on ICPD Review, held in The Hague, which guides us in the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

6. We urge all Governments to implement the ICPD Programme of Action, in close partnership with the civil society, to develop long-term perspectives and strategies addressing the interrelationships between water, food, natural resources, environment and population. We also urge all Governments to address the factors hindering gender equity and male participation; access to quality reproductive health information and services, especially for youth; as well as those factors contributing to high abortion rates, the spread of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and high infant and maternal mortality rates. We urge our fellow parliamentarians to put these issues on their national agendas, take concerted action on them, and monitor progress on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

7. Recognizing the inseparable relationship between population and sustainable development, we urge all Governments to ensure that international agreements and conventions, especially international trade rules, are fully consistent with food security whereby basic needs and conditions for human survival, such as food and water resources, are met.

8. We call on the United Nations, including its regional commissions, and in particular the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), to continue to play a pivotal role in helping countries to

formulate and implement population policies and strategies, as well as on regional mechanisms such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and others to assist in such activities. We also call on the United Nations to hold its next International Conference on Population and Development in 2004 in a country in Asia.

9. The insufficiency of the resources allocated to population and reproductive health is a major obstacle to the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. We therefore call upon all donor Governments to increase the flow of official development assistance to the 0.7 per cent target of GNP and to devote 4.5 to 5 per cent of it to population and reproductive health. We urge recipient Governments to increase the share of their national budgets to population and reproductive health. We also urge our fellow parliamentarians to push for greater investment in the social sector, particularly for population and development, and call on all parties to ensure that resources are used efficiently.

Pledge

10. On the eve of the Day of 6 Billion and of the new millennium, now is the time for action. We must urgently address population and development issues in a comprehensive and strategic manner. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to the parliamentary movement as an important vehicle to change the mindset and behaviours of citizens and Governments, and to translate people's concerns into legislative and government action. To provide global support for such actions at national and regional levels, we, the members of the AFPPD, pledge to take the lead in establishing a world-wide network of parliamentarians concerned with population and development, as recommended in The Hague Declaration.

11. We strongly pledge to translate this commitment into proactive advocacy on population and development issues and into direct support to population policies and programmes in order to meet people's basic needs and to bring about peace, prosperity and equity.

12. Changing the world sounds like a formidable task but when individuals change, the world changes. As individuals and as parliamentarians, we pledge to carry out the actions set forth in this Declaration. We have both the authority and responsibility to do so.