



The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population

NEWS LETTER

No.39 October 2015

Report on the 11th AFPPD General Assembly

Hon. Keizo Takemi, JFPF Executive Director, is re-elected as AFPPD Chair

On October 10-11, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) held its General Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand. 104 delegates attended in all from 25 different countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including the Speaker of the National Assembly of Bhutan and other parliamentarians, officers of National Committees on Population and Development, and representatives from international organizations. The General Assembly is AFPPD's highest decision-making body. AFPPD has held regular General Assemblies since holding the first in 1984 in the Indian capital of New Delhi. This year's was AFPPD's 11th.



The theme of this General Assembly was "Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians Advancing ICPD, Achieving Sustainable Development Goals". In the wake of the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly on September 27 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Assembly confirmed its own Strategic Plan for parliamentarians in the Asia-Pacific Region and debated other matters including revisions to AFPPD's Constitution and the election of its Office Bearers. In a resolution submitted by AFPPD's Executive Committee, a report was given on its adoption of various manuals, such as financial and operational manuals, that will provide a formal framework for AFPPD's Secretariat in which to conduct its work.

The General Assembly voted to re-elect JFPF Executive Director Hon. Keizo Takemi as Chair of AFPPD, and in other resolutions parliamentarians from China, India, Kazakhstan, Australia, and the Philippines were elected as Vice-Chairs; an MP from Thailand was elected as Secretary-General; an MP from Cambodia was elected as Treasurer; and MPs from Vietnam and Iran were elected as executive members. The election of an Executive Director was also approved.

AFPPD's Standing Committees were also re-organized at this General Assembly. AFPPD now has three Standing Committees: on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, on Investing in Youth, and on Active Aging. Each will be headed by joint chairs from two different countries, with the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Standing Committee headed by MPs from New Zealand and Tonga; the Investing in Youth Standing Committee by MPs from Tajikistan and Nepal; and the Active Aging Standing Committee by AFPPD Chair Hon. Keizo Takemi and Hon. Dr. Wang Longde from China, Vice-Chair of AFPPD.

The chairs of each Standing Committee will be able to take part in proceedings of the Executive Committee as non-voting members, where among other things they will be able to express opinions on AFPPD's activity policies. With these changes a structure has been put in place that will allow AFPPD's activities to be conducted more dynamically than before.

Proceedings at the General Assembly

At the Opening Session H.E. Prof. Pornpetch Wichitcholchai, President of the Thai National Legislative Assembly, gave a welcome speech in which he stated "following the adoption of SDGs by the U.N. General Assembly on September 27, measures to deal with population issues are going to be important if societies are to advance their long-term growth and development further, and Thailand will also be engaging with these issues. In that regard also this meeting is significant, being held as it is almost immediately following the adoption of the SDGs."



The Japanese Ambassador to Thailand, H.E. Shiro Sadoshima, then gave a speech on behalf of the Government of Japan. He was then followed by Ms. Yoriko Yasukawa, the new Director of the UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (APRO). Lastly AFPPD Chair Hon. Keizo Takemi gave an opening statement.

In his speech Hon. Takemi noted that AFPPD came into being as a result of the 1981 Asian Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (ACPPD) in Beijing, China. He described how major changes had taken place in the Asia-Pacific Region, as a result of efforts over the 30 years since. He noted that as the region's demographic transitions had progressed, its dependent population ratio had reached an all-time low this year. He went on to say however that "although looking at the Asia-Pacific Region today we are the beneficiaries of its demographic transition, from this point on countries in this region are going to have increasingly aging populations, whether they want that or not. In that respect population aging will not be an issue restricted to developed nations, but is a challenge for us all." Hon. Takemi issued a strong call to politicians, in their capacity as their people's representatives, to take measures to deal with this issue, which countries in that situation are now facing. It was an appeal that won broad favor among the delegates.

Following the opening ceremony, thematic sessions were held, which dealt with the following topics.

- Plenary Session: Moving from ICPD/MDGs to ICPD beyond2014/SDGs: How can we carry forward the momentum of the ICPD beyond 2014 commitment in the SDG landscape?
- Thematic Session I: Investing in Young People: How can we realize the demographic dividend and promote youth participation as an engine of growth and sustainability?
- Thematic Session II: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: What can parliamentarians do to reduce gender gaps and advance gender equality and women's empowerment?
- Thematic Session III: How can we enable healthy, productive, and dignified lives for older persons and realize the second demographic dividend for economic and social development?

In Session III, Hon. Takemi gave a presentation describing the situation surrounding aging in Asia as a whole. He also talked about Japan's experience, where the introduction of a universal health



insurance scheme by the government of Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi led to an orderly redistribution of incomes in Japan. This produced a benefit in the form of reducing income inequality in Japan, which gave the country political stability and which in turn contributed to its greater long-term economic development. Hon. Takemi said it highlighted the importance to any country of introducing universal health coverage (UHC) for its citizens in the early stages of its economic growth.

Proceedings then turned to AFPPD-related business, and through resolutions moved by Hon. Takemi, certain reports were approved and other matters were debated.

The following matters were reported by AFPPD Secretary-General Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, and approved by the General Assembly.

- ① Outcomes of AFPPD's Strategic Plan 2013-2015
- ② Demonstration of AFPPD's new website and knowledge platform
- ③ AFPPD's 2013-2015 Financial Statement

During this Session six countries were introduced as new members of AFPPD since the previous General Assembly, including Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and Bhutan. Formal approval of Bhutan's accession in particular was reported at the meeting of the Executive Committee on October 9. Hon. Takemi expressed his welcome for Bhutan's formal accession to AFPPD, and the Speaker of Bhutan's National Assembly responded with a speech of thanks in return.

Following discussion of the following matters:

- ① AFPPD's 2016-2019 Strategic Plan;
 - ② Revisions to AFPPD's Constitution;
 - ③ Election of AFPPD's Officer Bearers;
 - ④ The proposal regarding AFPPD Standing Committees; and
 - ⑤ International parliamentarians' conference in the run-up to the 2016 G7 Summit,
- all these matters were approved, thereby setting in motion AFPPD's new organizational structure in both form and practice.