



The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population

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The Asian and African Parliamentarians' Meeting and Study Visit in Ghana

From August 8 to 10, the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), which serves as the secretariat for the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF), organized the Asian and African parliamentarians' meeting and study visit in Accra, Ghana, with the Parliament of Ghana as a host and the Japan Trust Fund (JTF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) as supporters, under the theme of "Parliamentarians as the Fourth Pillar for Achieving the 2030 Agenda: Population, Food Security, and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)".



The conference was attended by approximately 100 participants from 17 countries, who discussed policy proposals towards the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7) and G20, both of which will be hosted by Japan in 2019, and adopted the conference declaration. From Japan, Hon. Yukio Ubukata (former Vice-Chair of JPPF), Hon. Hiroyuki Nagahama (Vice-Chair of JPPF), and Hon. Dr. Toshiko Abe (Chair of the Gender Issues Committee of JPPF) participated from JPPF, and delivered the opening address, the keynote speech, and the closing address, respectively, setting the basic direction of the conference and showing Japan's presence in Africa's development issues. In addition to reinforcing ties between Japan and Africa towards TICAD, the participation of Asian countries provided an excellent opportunity to promote South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.



At the opening ceremony, Hon. Joseph Osei-Owusu, First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana, delivered the opening statement on behalf of the Speaker of Parliament of Ghana, who was on an overseas trip. Hon. Osei-Owusu also hosted the official dinner reception.

- Opening Session
- Session 1: Food Security and Environmental Sustainability for the 2030 Agenda
- Session 2: Investing in Youth and Gender Equality
- Session 3: Building a Healthy Society: Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)
- Session 4: Parliamentarians' Role in Ensuring Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance (TAGG)
- Session 5: Legislative Initiative to Support the SDGs
- Session 6: Discussion for the Adoption of Policy Proposal: Building Partnership for Achieving the SDGs Towards G20 and TICAD in 2019



<Participants: Cameroon, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Japan, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, Romania, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Zambia>

During the 2-day meeting, it was pointed out that population is none other than our society in which no one should be left behind, a new perspective that could lead to a paradigm shift in how we think about the relation between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and population. It was also confirmed that to achieve the SDGs, which often lack logical consistency on the whole, political will as manifested in policy is necessary and that parliamentarians, alongside national governments, the private sector, and the civil society, have a unique and significant role to play.

It is estimated that Africa will account for more than 90% of the increase in world population between 2020 and 2100. It was noted that curbing the rapid population increase in Africa is essential for achieving the SDGs and that, at the same time, addressing the population issue in Asia, which now has more than half of the world population, is the most important challenge. The participants also discussed the relation between mortality transition and fertility transition, which are two components of demographic transition. It was indicated that in addition to efforts to prevent infectious diseases and reduce maternal and infant mortality rates in Africa and other regions, comparable efforts must also be made to promote fertility transition. Without such efforts, the rapid population increase will continue. It was argued that efforts in promoting fertility transition should include ensuring universal access to reproductive health (RH) services, as an integral part of universal health coverage (UHC), and providing proper sex education.

The Chair of the Zambia All Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (ZAPPD) reported on the TAGG mechanism implemented in Zambia. The mechanism, which mandates the parliament to monitor the activities of the government, was successfully initiated by Zambian parliamentarians who participated in APDA's TAGG project from 2009 to 2011. A Kenyan parliamentarian also pointed to the results of a constitutional amendment that Kenyan parliamentarians initiated after they were inspired at the same project organized by APDA.



Towards the end of the meeting and after lively discussions, the participants adopted a parliamentary statement as the outcome document. Many parliamentarians indicated their enthusiasm for tabling the document as an official motion to their respective parliaments.

On August 10, the participants in the study visit went to the Parliament of Ghana and visited Ridge Hospital, one of the main hospitals in Accra, where they were explained about the maternal and child care programmes and remote counseling services. From the perspective of the linkage between corporate activities and research towards achieving the SDGs, they then paid a call on the University of Ghana, where they were given a general overview of Ajinomoto Foundation's project for improving nutrition in Ghana to secure "nutrition in the first 1,000 days (from conception to a child's second birthday)", which is an essential part of food security.

Ghana is the world's second largest producer of cacao. Most of the cacao produced is exported as raw materials, and there is only one company in Ghana that processes the cacao to make products. The participants visited the cacao processing company and were briefed on the corporate vision and social responsibility. Lastly, they paid a call on Afienea Youth Leadership, Training and Skills Centre, where they had an earnest exchange with young members of the center before completing the study visit programme.



Against the background that African countries have been colonized by European countries in the past, African parliamentarians, in particular, have spoken highly of the project organized by Japan partly because it is free from such historical shackles and all participants can participate and openly exchange views on a level playing field. Participants from many countries, including Cameroon, Djibouti, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia have expressed hopes to have the next project organized in their countries.

