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## **Report**

### **Meeting of Egyptian Parliamentary Committees Concerned with Population and Development**

**November 14, 2023**

**Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt**

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#### **Introduction**

On 14 November 2023, the Arab Parliamentarians Forum for Population and Development (FAPPD) held a parliamentary meeting in Cairo, Egypt, which included the following Egyptian parliamentary committees:

1. Committee on Social Solidarity and Persons with Disabilities
2. Committee on Family Affairs
3. Committee on Health
4. Committee on Education and Practical Research
5. Committee on Human Rights
6. Committee on the Environment
7. Committee on Constitutional and Legislative Affairs

This is in collaboration with the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the government of Japan. The aim is to assess the implementation of recommendations from the meetings of APDA/FAPPD in previous sessions. These recommendations were endorsed in several Arab and Asian countries, with Egypt as a case study, examining the extent to which they have been applied. It is worth noting that the meeting was attended by 50 parliamentarians from the Egyptian House of Representatives, heads of the aforementioned committees, members of parliamentary committees, relevant ministries responsible for population and development in Egypt, and representatives from civil society institutions. During the meeting, each committee presented an overview of the roles, legislation, laws, and regulations that were enacted as a result of the recommendations announced by APDA/FAPPD. These have now become tangible and applicable laws in practice.

Presidents and members of the Egyptian parliamentary committees, express their thanks, appreciation, and gratitude to the government of Japan and the Japanese people for their support to FAPPD. This support plays a significant and effective role in population and development issues in Arab countries. It also contributes positively and interactively to the implementation of recommendations from APDA/FAPPD meetings across various development fields in the Arab region. The acknowledged positive impact includes the enactment of laws and legislation that have achieved numerous accomplishments and successes in population and development issues. Therefore, we highly value the humanitarian and social international role played by the Japanese government in our Arab region, and we express our appreciation for the fruitful cooperation towards Japan. The participants also expressed their gratitude for the important and effective role of APDA and the partnership linking them to FAPPD. They acknowledged the achievements resulting from this collaboration in many Arab and Asian countries. They also appreciated to UNFPA for its crucial role in various population and development issues, especially during the critical period that many Arab countries are going through. appreciated UNFPA's role in regularly exchanging information with the Arab parliamentary committees, and through this, building a cooperative relationship to provide a better life for the next generation.

The parliamentarians and other participants also recognized the role and contributions played by APDA/FAPPD through its participation in international and regional conferences and its ongoing exchange of information with Arab parliaments, including its activities through reports and newsletters on population issues.

## **Session 1**

### **Hon. Dr. Abdul Hadi Al-Qasabi, Chair of the Committee on Social Solidarity, Family, and Persons with Disabilities (Majority Leader in the Egyptian House of Representatives)**

"Leader of the Majority, Dr. Abdul Hadi Al-Qasabi, emphasized that Egypt is a rights-based state. The Egyptian Parliament is considered a model for legislation in various human rights domains. The Parliament has passed a series of human rights laws recommended by APDA/FAPPD in its meetings. Some of these laws include the National Council for Women Law No. 30 of 2018, Persons with Disabilities Rights Law No. 10 of 2018, the issuance of the National Human Rights Strategy, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood Law, the Elderly Rights Law, the Law of Honoring Martyrs, Injured, Victims, Missing, and Families Affected by Military, Terrorist, and Security Operations. In collaboration with APDA/FAPPD, we have successfully launched a TV show in Egypt dedicated to population and development issues in various governorates. The network broadcasts several programs covering youth, education, and women. The network plays a developmental role in serving local communities and addressing the issues and problems of these regions covered by its channels. This is achieved through collaboration with local authorities and various relevant executive bodies, in addition to supporting various national and enlightenment campaigns aimed at uplifting local communities.

### **Dr. Mohammed Al-Smadi, Secretary-General of FAPPD**

At the beginning Dr. Mohammed Al-Smadi expressed gratitude and appreciation to the government and people of Japan for their support to the forum, enabling it to fulfill its mission towards population and development issues in 21 Arab countries. He briefed the attendees on the forum's message, goals, and the strategic plan for the coming years. He emphasized the importance of this meeting for discussing and examining the reality of the recommendations approved during the APDA/FAPPD's previous meetings, and the extent to which these recommendations have been translated into laws and legislation and implemented in Arab countries. This is the main reason for our meeting today, to explore the case study of Egypt as the first step and a positive model for the potential dissemination of this model to the rest of the Arab countries in the future.

### **Dr. Hala Youssef, UNFPA Advisor**

Dr. Hala Youssef commended the fruitful collaboration of parliamentarians with UNFPA, FAPPD, and APDA. This collaboration aims to highlight and work towards achieving the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She emphasized the importance of the issues adopted by FAPPD, especially having a clear roadmap for implementing our commitments to population and development issues. This includes gender equality, women's empowerment, comprehensive access to Sexual Reproductive health (SRH) services, investment in youth, and boosting momentum for the implementation of SDGs by 2030. She stated that laws and legislation in the Arab region should address health services, family planning, and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) without discrimination. She added, 'Parliamentarians play a strategic role in creating a legislative environment that ensures the readiness and capacity of health systems to provide RH services, respond to GBV, and protect health workers in development contexts and emergencies.

### **Hon. Dr. Soheir Abdelhamid, Member of the Health Committee**

Dr. Soheir Abdelhamid affirmed that the role of the Health Committee in the Egyptian House of Representatives in monitoring the performance of the new comprehensive health insurance system is continuous. This is to ensure the provision of comprehensive health coverage for beneficiaries under the system and the quality of medical services provided to them. She highlighted the qualitative leap and achievements in the infrastructure of health facilities, equipping them with the latest medical equipment, and introducing medical and therapeutic services in accordance with international medical practices. She pointed out that over 4 million medical services have been provided to beneficiaries of the comprehensive health insurance system so far. She emphasized the steady progress towards completing the comprehensive health reform path in Egypt, aligning with the recommendations of FAPPD, which closely monitors the steps we take.

She continued that Law No. 2 of 2018 on Comprehensive Health Insurance, which came to light thanks to the role of FAPPD and the Egyptian House of Representatives, supported the state's efforts in the success of comprehensive health reform. She highlighted the special

importance of this law as it directly affects citizens' health, constituting a constitutional obligation to ensure comprehensive health care for them. She emphasized that there is no life without health care, provided through offering health care and comprehensive health coverage for citizens. She pointed out that the progress of societies and the achievement of SDGs are closely linked to the extent to which citizens within the society enjoy health care and its quality. She also praised the presence of promising young leaders at the helm of the work in the Health Insurance Authority and its various health facilities. These leaders have proven their competence in managing and operating the new Comprehensive Health Insurance hospitals within the Egyptian strategic vision to achieve SDGs on Health by 2030.

#### **Hon. Dr. Sami Hashem, Chair of the Education and Scientific Research Committee**

He spoke about the quality of education as a fundamental right for every citizen and emphasized the importance of preparing individuals for life and success under all circumstances. He highlighted the serious challenge posed by artificial intelligence, emphasizing the importance of the education system being prepared to face and harness this challenge for the benefit of humanity. He stressed the need for curricula that focus on skills and information that gain value through practical application. The education project sheds light on two of the most important issues that societies depend on for progress and development: education and empowerment. He explained that Egypt has achieved unprecedented accomplishments in the empowerment of women, under the guidance of a conscious political leadership that recognizes the societal necessity of empowering women.

He added that education is one of the most important issues in the National Strategy for Women's Empowerment 2023, praising the role of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education in curriculum development. He noted that the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood conducted a study on the portrayal of women in the curricula of primary, preparatory, and secondary stages. This study aims to reflect a respectful image of women and eliminate violence against women from the curricula.

The Committee on Education in the Egyptian House of Representatives is in the process of issuing a law to establish the Egyptian Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Technical, Vocational, and Professional Education. The project aims to enhance the quality of the technical, vocational, and professional education system, including institutions and programs, in accordance with accreditation standards and the requirements of the labor market. It serves the sustainable development plans and policies of the state, outlining the general framework for the quality of technical and vocational education programs, teaching and learning methods, and necessary assessment approaches. Additionally, it establishes accreditation conditions for technical and vocational education institutions and regular and non-regular vocational training centers in all their forms, including pre-university technical education.

#### **Hon. Dr. Tareq Radwan, Chair of the Human Rights Committee**

He talked about the human rights strategy in Egypt, emphasizing that the committee prioritizes several important files and issues. At the forefront is monitoring the implementation of the

goals outlined in the National Human Rights Strategy, which includes its four pillars: civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, human rights for women, children, persons with disabilities, youth, and the elderly, as well as education and capacity building in the field of human rights.

He added that the committee, in collaboration with FAPPD, will hold hearings and a series of meetings to discuss ways to enhance women's rights, including political, economic, and social participation, as well as issues related to domestic violence and gender discrimination. Additionally, they will focus on promoting children's rights by protecting them from violence, exploitation, and discrimination, and ensuring their rights to education and healthcare. Furthermore, the committee is keen on discussing labor rights by studying working conditions and workers' rights in Egypt, including minimum wages, working hours, and occupational health and safety.

## **Session 2**

### **Hon. Rasha Ramadan, Chair of the Energy and Environment Committee**

The file of empowering Egyptian women has witnessed an unprecedented local and international breakthrough. From this perspective, constitutional rights for women have been translated into laws, strategies, and executive programs implemented by governmental and non-governmental entities. Moreover, any official political discourse (in all local and international forums) by the President of the Republic has not been devoid of praising Egyptian women. Egypt's experience in the file of empowering women and achieving gender equality has become a subject of global admiration and acclaim. The beginning was with the 2014 constitution, which included more than 20 articles regulating issues of citizenship, equality, criminalizing violence, and discrimination. The National Women's Council was restructured as the national mechanism responsible for empowering Egyptian women and achieving gender equality in February 2016, after a review of its role, competencies, and assigned tasks to achieve comprehensive empowerment for women. A woman won the position of the council's president through elections among its members, making her the third president since its establishment in 2000 and the youngest woman to hold this position.

In 2016, the National Women's Council developed the National Strategy for Empowering Egyptian Women 2030, aligning with SDGs and Egypt's Vision 2030. In a collaborative framework with all relevant parties and civil society, the President of the Republic approved it as the official action plan for the coming years in the Year of the Egyptian Woman 2017. The United Nations announced that Egypt was the first country globally to launch its national strategy within the framework of SDGs. Simultaneously, the "Observatory of Egyptian Women" was established as an independent observatory to ensure the precise and continuous implementation of the strategy through monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Additionally, Law No. 30 of 2018 was enacted to regulate the work of the National Women's Council, expanding its jurisdiction to align with its responsibilities.

Over the past years, the Council has implemented numerous activities, achieving nearly 12 million annual educational outreach through interactive on-the-ground activities. Social media campaigns on various platforms have garnered millions of views.

Egypt has worked on issuing several national legislations in recent years to empower women politically, socially, and economically, as well as to protect them from all forms of violence and discrimination. Key measures include the introduction of a quota for women in parliamentary councils in the Egyptian constitution, the strengthening of penalties for harassment, female genital mutilation, and electronic crimes. Other legislative efforts focus on safeguarding personal data for women exposed to violence, ensuring equal investment opportunities between women and men, and promoting women's representation in the boards of financial and banking institutions, among other initiatives.

In recent years, Egypt has achieved significant representation for Egyptian women in government and parliamentary councils. Women now constitute 25% of the Egyptian parliament and reached 25% representation in the cabinet in 2018. The President has increased appointments, resulting in women making up 14% of the Senate, 31% as governor deputies, and 27% as deputy ministers. Additionally, 44% of the National Council for Human Rights is comprised of women. In addition, Rasha Ramadan stated that internationally, Egypt won a seat in the recent elections for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the term 2023-2026, securing 126 votes in the elections held at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. The National Women's Council participates in representing women in international forums, in accordance with its mandate, in Arab, regional, African, and international forums, totaling over 175 events discussing various women's issues. This includes annual participation in the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. Egypt also consistently implements the training program "African Rural Women and Entrepreneurship" for the fourth consecutive year, targeting women from 15 African countries. Additionally, Egypt announced the development of its first national plan for "Women, Peace, and Security."

#### **Hon. Hend Hazem, a member of the Social Solidarity Committee**

She addressed the issue of people with disabilities, expressing her honor to be present at this important meeting. She began by expressing gratitude and appreciation to the Japanese government for its support of FAPPD. She emphasized the significance of discussing and sharing important issues in Egypt and the world.

Speaking on behalf of the 15 million people with disabilities in Egypt, she highlighted the "Shoulder to Shoulder" initiative launched by the National Civil Work Alliance. The initiative aims to reach all cities across the country, contributing to addressing the current economic conditions, especially by supporting the most vulnerable groups and impoverished families. Hind Hazem added that the "Shoulder to Shoulder" initiative is considered the largest initiative for social protection. It aims to provide more than 5 million boxes of food items, reaching all governorates. She pointed out that this initiative reaffirms the belief in the capabilities of Egyptians and civil society institutions to achieve social justice in a real sense.

Today, we take pride in allocating 8 seats for people with disabilities to become members of the Egyptian Parliament. Additionally, education and healthcare are provided free of charge, and 5% of positions in the public and private sectors are reserved for the employment of people with disabilities.

**Dr. Talaat Abdulqawi, Member of the Solidarity Committee, and President of the General Union of Non-Governmental Organizations in Egypt<sup>1</sup>**

He began his speech by expressing gratitude and appreciation to the government of Japan, the great Japanese people, and all Japanese entities supporting human and developmental issues. He also thanked them for their support and cooperation with FAPPD, which represents the official umbrella for population and development committees in parliamentary and legislative councils in Arab countries. It is the only entity capable of unifying efforts for population and development issues in 21 Arab countries.

He addressed the file of the objectives of the National Alliance's work in Egypt, considering the approval of the Egyptian Parliament for the draft law presented by 60 deputies regarding the National Alliance for Developmental Civil Work as a strong addition to the alliance's work and its partnership with the state in community and developmental activities. This law provides the alliance with legitimacy and a legal framework to regulate its activities and agreements with other entities.

He pointed out that the National Alliance used to disburse its funds through the funds of each individual association as its own funds. However, with the new law, there will be a specific budget for the alliance, and it will enjoy technical, financial, and administrative independence. He explained that the draft law comes in light of the role played by civil society institutions in assisting state bodies involved in community building by providing comprehensive developmental services in all fields of civil work, aiming to achieve further social and economic development for all citizens, especially those in need of care.

He explained that the National Alliance will work in the coming period to consider its executive regulations, confirming that there will be new developmental plans and programs for the alliance to increase its societal contribution. He praised the approval of the House of Representatives and the government to add a proposed clause from him to Article 21 of the draft law for the National Alliance for Non-Governmental Development Work. This includes exempting the National Alliance for Non-Governmental Development Work by up to 50% of monthly electricity, water, telephone, and gas bills, contributing to enriching the work of these institutions and their developmental contributions.

He concluded by saying that the National Alliance for Non-Governmental Development Work is an important pillar in the development process, a strong supporter of the social protection network system to achieve community development through service activities for the benefit of citizens across the governorates of Egypt.

**Mr. Yahya El-Eissawi, Assistant Secretary-General of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee**

He spoke about the legislation related to youth, highlighting that the Egyptian state has worked on empowering and qualifying the youth as a fundamental pillar towards building the new republic. This has been achieved through initiating dialogues with the youth, establishing a strong and diverse base of young competencies in various fields, recognizing their active and

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<sup>1</sup> NGO comprising 18,000 associations

vital role in efforts to achieve sustainable development and the revitalization of societies. The state has focused on harnessing the energy, creativity, and potential of the youth by providing training and necessary skills. The declaration of 2016 as the Year of Youth was a significant step in the history of empowering and engaging the youth in societal development. The state adopted a key philosophy with the youth titled "Qualification before Empowerment," emphasizing the creation of a political cadre capable of leadership. It also focused on ensuring their representation in various fields and enabling their participation in the decision-making process.

The political leadership's interest in empowering youth is reflected at the parliamentary level and in the legislation produced in close collaboration with the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. This is evident in the approval of several laws that support empowerment and enable youth participation, with the most notable of these laws being:

1. Law on the Regulation and Encouragement of Mobile Food Units and Simplification of License Issuance Procedures
2. Issuance of the First Law for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises, No. 152 of 2020, to Facilitate the Start of Small Projects.
3. Law No. 201 of 2020 regarding the regulation of microfinance activities, to facilitate the procedures for obtaining financing.
4. Law regulating certain conditions for deputy governors, to provide a legal framework for protecting the rights of those holding the position of deputy governor.
5. Amendment of some provisions of the Youth Organizations Regulation Law issued by Law No. 218 of 2017, for the benefit of youth and young people.
6. Amendment of the Fund for the Care of Innovators and Talents Care Law No. 1 of 2019, to support the care of talented and outstanding individuals.
7. Law No. 204 of 2020, regarding the State Award for the Young Creators, to discover young talents at an early age and stimulate creative energies.
8. Law on Incentives for Science, Technology, and Innovation No. 23 of 2018, to support the scientific research and innovation system.

## **Closing**

At the end of the meeting, which lasted for continuous 7 hours of discussion and dialogue on several important issues related to population and development, the participants expressed their thanks, appreciation, and gratitude to the government and people of Japan for their support to the FAPPD. They acknowledged FAPPD's keen interest in addressing various critical issues, especially given the current challenges in the Arab region, including humanitarian crises resulting from forced and voluntary migration in some countries. They expressed their hope for the continued support of the Japanese government to the forum, enabling it to fulfill its mission faithfully and sincerely.



### **News sites that published news of the meeting:**

1. The Federation of Arab News Agencies  
“[FAPPD explores population, development issues in Egypt’s meeting](#)”
2. JORDAN NEWS AGENCY (PETRA)  
“[FAPPD explores population, development issues in Egypt's meeting](#)”
3. ALSHOROQ:  
“[The Leader of the Parliamentary Majority in the House of Representatives: Egypt is a model of a rights-based state](#)” (Arabic)
4. EGYPT PARLIAMENT  
“[With the Presence of Over 50 MPs, Parliamentary Majority Leader: Egypt is a Model of a Rights-Based State](#)”
5. DOSTOR  
“[With the Presence of Over 50 MPs, the Arab Parliamentarians' Forum on Population and Development Holds Meeting in Cairo](#)”
6. ELBALAD  
“[Chaired by Al-Qasabi, the Arab Parliamentarians' Forum on Population and Development Holds Meeting in Cairo](#)”
7. Elwatan news  
“[With the Presence of Over 50 MPs, the Arab Parliamentarians' Forum on Population and Development Holds in Cairo](#)”