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1. 65th AFPPD Executive Committee Meeting

The Executive Committee of AFPPD met under the chairmanship of Hon Mr Yasuo Fukuda, MP of Japan, in Jakarta, Indonesia, and reviewed the work of AFPPD. It also discussed the review process of ICPD+15 and the role of parliamentarians in advancing the ICPD Programme of Action. It was agreed that AFPPD should assess its own achievements and challenges and its work with UNFPA to enhance parliamentarians' participation and impact. The Executive Committee also approved AFPPD's programmes for 2009.

2. Record Number of Women Elected to India's Lower House

With 79 MPs under 40 years of age and 36 members who are at least 70 years old, the 15th Lok Sabha (Lower House) of the Indian Parliament is a blend of youth and experience. Although the new Lok Sabha has a higher number of under-40 members compared with the

last, the average age of the House is higher — at 53.03 years, this is the third oldest House so far.

Although the women’s reservation Bill proposing 33% reservation for women in Parliament was not passed, the new Lok Sabha has the highest number of women MPs ever elected to the Lok Sabha. At 58, the 15th Lok Sabha has 13 more women MPs than the last House and nine more than the previous best of 49 in the 13th Lok Sabha. The representation of women members has crossed the 10% mark for the first time in Indian history. However, this is still low in comparison with parliaments of the industrialized countries. For instance, UK, USA, Italy, Ireland and France have 19.3%, 16.3%, 16.1%, 14.2% and 13.9% women parliamentarians, respectively. The Sweden parliament, with 47% women MPs, has the best gender ratio in the world. (ICYO)

3. APDA Meeting Review Achievements and Challenges for ICPD+15

Parliamentarians from Asia and the Pacific met in Jakarta, Indonesia from 3-4 May for the 25th Asian Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Population and Development, with a focus on “Achievements and Challenges of ICPD+15.” The meeting was organised by the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and hosted by the Indonesian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IFPPD), with support from UNFPA, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), and the National Family Planning Coordinating Board (NFPCB/ BKKBN) of Indonesia. Parliamentarians adopted a statement indicating their continuous commitment for ICPD goals.

The opening session was addressed by Hon Mr Yasuo Fukuda, MP, former prime minister of Japan, and chairman of APDA and AFPPD; Dr Zahidul Huque, UNFPA Representative in Indonesia; Dr. Raj Karim, Regional Director of IPPF ESEAOR, and other high-level parliamentary, government and UN representatives.

4. Filipino Legislators Visit Thailand

The Philippine Legislators’ Committee on Population and Development Foundation, Inc. (PLCPD), under its Leadership Development Program for National and Local Policymakers, in cooperation with AFPPD, arranged five provincial legislators and mayors to visit Thailand to expose them to its successful implementation of policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS, family planning, and reproductive health, including visits to AFPPD, the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Center, Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, Department of Disease Control of the Ministry of Public Health, Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand, and the Thai Senate.

5. Pakistan Minister Seeks Help with Population Welfare

Islamabad—Pakistan’s Minister for Population Welfare Hon Dr Firdous Ashique Awan has

sought greater cooperation from Britain's government for population welfare and development in Pakistan. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of All Party Parliamentarian Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health in London, the federal minister said that the British government and other international community members should take Pakistan government on board along with NGOs during planning and implementation of population welfare projects. (APP)

6. New Zealand Parliament to Hold Hearing on Maternal Health

On Mother's Day, the New Zealand Parliamentarians' Group on Population and Development (NZPPD) announced it will be holding an 'Open Hearing on Maternal Health in the Pacific' on 21st September 2009 at the New Zealand Parliament. The overall aim of the Open Hearing is to increase action and investment in maternal health and related issues in the Pacific region by New Zealand and other stakeholders. An invitation for written and oral submissions and terms of reference for the Open Hearing will be available shortly on Family Planning International's website www.fpi.org.nz. The submissions will then be heard by NZPPD members and selected observers during the one day Open Hearing. (NZPPD)

7. PNG Parliamentary Group Formally Established

At its first formal meeting from 14-16 May, the PNG Parliamentary Group on Population and Development adopted a constitution and work plan to take the Group to the end of this year.

Hon Malakai Tabar, MP, Papua New Guinea was elected as national president and Dame Carol Kidu, Minister for Community Development, as the senior vice-president. Other vice-presidents elected were Hon Theo Zurenuoc, MP (Momase), Karimui Nomane MP Hon Posi Menai (Highlands), North Fly MP Hon Boka Kondra (Southern) and Kavieng MP Hon Martin Aini (Islands). Sumkar MP Hon Ken Fairweather was appointed as the group's patron while North Waghi MP Hon Benjamin Mul doubled the task of secretary and treasurer. This was an effort by PGPD of Australia and UNFPA.

8. Campaign Aims to Boost Women's Participation in Solomon Islands Parliament

A campaign has been launched in the Solomon Islands to reserve 10 seats in Parliament for women, reports Radio Australia. Minister of Women, Youth and Children Affairs, Hon Ms Johnson Koli, launched the Special Temporary measures campaign this week. Ms Koli said the election next year is an opportunity to put in place affirmative action. The campaign proposes that 10 seats be added to the existing 50 seat Parliament with elected women representing 9 provinces and Honiara. (PNS)

9. Azerbaijan MPs Discuss National Reproductive Health Law & ICPD

On 30 April in Baku, Azerbaijan, the EPF member Parliamentary group in the National

Parliament of Azerbaijan held a National Parliamentary Forum on Youth Reproductive Health and Rights, with the support of UNFPA as part of the EC/UNFPA funded Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC). Parliamentarians, key Government stakeholders and partner NGOs actively participated in the Forum to elaborate follow up plans on the RHIYC project in Azerbaijan and to formulate strategies for the sustainable improvement of youth SRHR, including discussions on an ambitious draft law on reproductive health proposed by the Parliamentary group and currently in discussions in Parliament.

Hon Malahat Ibrahimkizi, MP, Chair of the EPF Parliamentary Group and author of the draft law on Reproductive Health and Family Planning, chaired the Forum. EPF Executive Committee Member Hon Chantal Gill'ard, MP Netherlands praised Azerbaijan Parliamentarians on their work on such an extensive law and informed about the current youth reproductive health challenges in Europe and the Netherlands. (EPF)

10. German Parliament Votes to Change Law on Late-Term Abortions

In the Bundestag vote on 14 May, 326 delegates voted in favor of the consultation period which includes a doctor's psychological evaluation. Of the 612 parliamentarians involved in the vote, 234 voted against and 52 abstained. Parliamentarians also voted in favor of increased consultations and support for families with handicapped children considering a termination.

The motion mandates that women receive counseling from a doctor about the medical and psychological consequences of a late-term abortion. The doctor should also inform the patient about living with a physically or mentally disabled child, and point her towards other means of support. A woman considering a late-term abortion would also have a three-day waiting period between the counseling session and the procedure to give her time to think about her options. After being approved by the upper chamber of parliament, the Bundesrat, it should come into effect in January 2010. (DW/AFP)

11. Abortion Bill Approved in Monaco

The Monaco Parliament (National Council) has unanimously approved a bill authorizing medical abortions. The bill was passed in a 26-0 vote, despite the fact that 90% of its population is formally Catholic. The legislation had been in process for five years and it is the first case of legalizing abortion in the country where Catholicism is the state religion.

12. Parliamentarians Should Act on Climate Change

In a message delivered to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Conference on the Global Economic Crisis, held in Geneva, Switzerland from 7-8 May 2009, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasized the role that parliamentarians play in tackling some of the current

global crises, including climate change, the financial crisis and the recent H1N1 flu outbreak.

In the message, which was delivered by Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Secretary-General Ban highlighted the current and ongoing impacts of climate change, and the current economic and financial turmoil, and stressed that the world needs the influence of parliamentarians to address these concerns. He urged parliamentarians to act, pointing out their “considerable authority to make decisions that will have long-term repercussions for our collective future.” (UN News).

13. ECOWAS Parliament to be Established

A new parliament for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is to be elected by universal adult suffrage with representation from member states by the end of 2010. Hon Mr John Tia, leader of Ghana's delegation to the ECOWAS Parliament and Deputy Majority Leader announced this in Tamale, Ghana on 31 April at a press conference to sensitise the public on the activities of the ECOWAS Parliament. (GNA)

14. Angolan MP Backs Women in Parliamentary Statutes

São Tomé and Príncipe - The Angolan parliamentary delegation will propose the inclusion of the Parliamentary Women Network in the statutes of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Community of the Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP). This was expressed by MP Cesaltina Major, chairperson of the women parliamentarians team of Angola's National Assembly and member of the Angolan delegation to the first Parliamentary Assembly of the CPLP, which opened on 27 April in Sao Tome and Principe. (Angola Press)

15. World Bank Publishes Guide for Parliamentarians on Oversight and Budgeting

In the recently published WBI guide ‘Legislative Oversight and Budgeting’ academics and legislative strengthening practitioners examine parliaments’ oversight function. Good parliamentary oversight is critical to increase public financial accountability, curb corruption and contribute to poverty reduction. Oversight tools available to parliamentarians vary from one country to another and are described through country case studies including practical accounts drawn from the experience of legislators. The book studies the budget process from the formulation and approval of the budget to implementation and ex-post examination of public accounts. Special attention is paid to mechanisms to assist parliamentarians such as Public Accounts Committees and independent Parliamentary Budget Offices. (World Bank)

More information at <http://go.worldbank.org/T1ADBIXN10>.

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