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FORUM NEWSLETTER

Publication of Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

4th Asian-Pacific Women Parliamentarians and Ministers' Conference

Empower Women to Achieve Economic Independence



Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, delivers the closing address of the 4th Asia-Pacific Women Parliamentarians' and Ministers' Conference

Women's participation in decision-making is the key to gender equality and gender-responsive governance. More than 70 parliamentarians and ministers from Asia and the Pacific assembled at the Parliament of New Zealand in Wellington to discuss "Gender-Responsive Governance: The Key to the Population and Development Agenda" on June 11-12, 2006, and endorsed the Plan of Action that outlined the policy-advocacy tasks for parliamentarians and parliamentary groups with regard to gender-responsive governance. The conference was organized by the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), and the New Zealand Parliamentarians' Group on Population and Development (NZPPD); in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Government of Japan and the Parliament of New Zealand. It was built on the successes of previous annual conferences held in the Philippines, Australia, and Sri Lanka.

Women's empowerment is needed in both political and business worlds, *Hon. Lianne Daiziel, Minister of Women's Affairs, Commerce and Small Business (New Zealand)*

Hon. Lianne Daiziel inaugurated the conference and said that the underlying issues that challenge women in New Zealand were not different from those of the



Hon. Lianne Daiziel, Minister of Women's Affairs, Commerce and Small Business (New Zealand)

rest of the world. "The only difference perhaps is the scale and scope. How do we ensure that women are able to gain economic independence? How do we ensure women and men have balance in their lives, and the contributions that they make to their home, community and workplace are valued? And, how do we ensure all women have real choices in their lives? How do we make the cry of the 1990s real – that women's rights are human rights?," she said.

She added that the world must enhance women's participation in every level both in political and business spheres. "This is particularly true in the board level of the private sector companies," Hon. Daiziel said.

Creating a society where human beings can live in dignity, *Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, MP (Japan), former Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan and AFPPD Chairman*

Mr. Yasuo Fukuda spoke at the opening ceremony and emphasized that parliamentarians must take the lead in addressing women's issues and gender-responsive governance. "The root cause of most of the women's issues lay in the environment that surrounds women. The main objective of the population issues that we are grappling with is to create a society where human beings can live in dignity as human beings ought to live. It is all too well to pity children or their mothers but should we not make



“We must take appropriate legislative actions, as well as allocate necessary budgetary resources”

Mr. Yasuo Fukuda



From L. to R.: Ms. Steve Chadwick, MP (New Zealand), NZPPD Chair and AFPPD Standing Committee on Women Chair; Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand; and Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, MP (Japan) and AFPPD Chairman

greater efforts to make sure that women escape from falling into pitiful circumstances? Having said this, it is incumbent on us, as elected representatives of our people, to be fully aware of the importance of the issue and take appropriate legislative actions, as well as allocate necessary budgetary resources,” he said.

He also spoke of AFPPD’s mission in elevating the status of women’s issues in the population and development policy. “In the past 25 years, AFPPD has always recognize that women’s issues are usually at the bottom of the population agenda and therefore, has always had a keen interest in addressing women’s issues,” Mr. Fukuda said.

He outlined several legislative accomplishments of women’s issues in countries such as Cambodia, The Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

“The understanding of women’s issues would be the key in solving population challenges in both industrialized and developing countries. It is true to say that the rapid decline of population in some industrial countries presents us with certain problems that are not easy to cope up with. However, I am confident that as we become fully aware of women’s issues, we will be able to overcome the challenges we face by slowing the process of population decline, and putting in place measures that will achieve both objectives of sustainability and ensuring national vitality,” he continued.

Mr. Fukuda emphasized the importance of women’s participation in every level of decision-making, specially

in the parliament. “The participation of women in national parliaments is something which is encouraging with all of you here today. I believe it is extremely important that the opinions of women, who make up half of the world’s population, should be adequately reflected in the national parliaments,” Mr. Fukuda added.

We can never stop our Programme of Action,

Ms. Steve Chadwick, MP (New Zealand), NZPPD Chair and AFPPD Standing Committee on Women Chair

In her speech during the opening ceremony, Ms. Steve Chadwick echoed Mr. Fukuda’s emphasis on women’s participation in every decision-making level. “Parliamentarians must come up with a programme of action that enshrines the importance of the involvement of women in all levels of governance to ensure that the right priorities are set, that the policies do not sit on a shelf and that legislative reform keeps up with the pace of women’s demands wherever we live in this region. We can never stop our Programme of Action. Either the work of our founders will simply dissipate or at worst, disappear and the agenda of the Population and Development set by



Ms. Steve Chadwick

ICPD in 1994 will be subsumed and overtaken by other male-led initiatives,” she said.

She added that women’s participation would also bridge the gap between the goals and the reality for sexual and reproductive health. “When we review the optimistic targets of access to sexual and reproductive health by 2015, we don’t need to panic but we do need to put our feet in the accelerator. The simplest way for us to speed up the programme is by encouraging more women into governance and political action,” Ms. Chadwick said.

Keynote Speech: Women are the primary agents of child welfare, Ms. Valerie De Fillipo, IPPF Director of External Affairs (London)

Ms. Valerie De Fillipo gave the keynote speech on gender equality in Asia and the Pacific. She said women traditionally faced vulnerability, risk and responsibility as they disproportionately suffer the burden of poverty. “They are the primary agents of child welfare in most societies, often carry the burden of sustaining their families economically and play a significant role in the management of natural resources. However, they are also victims of widespread and persistent discrimination. They also put their lives at risk every time they become pregnant and they are increasingly susceptible to HIV/AIDS,” Ms. De Fillipo said.

She noted that gender equality development in Asia and the Pacific was broad but inconsistent. “It is important to note that there has been a very broad progress across Asia and the Pacific



From L. to R.: Ms. Valerie De Fillipo, IPPF Director of External Affairs (London); and Dr. Sang Guowei, MP (China) and AFPPD Vice-Chairperson

“There has been a very broad progress across Asia and the Pacific region in areas such as expanding girls’ education and increasing women’s empowerment.”

Ms. Valerie De Fillipo

region in areas such as expanding girls' education and increasing women's empowerment, including the number of women coming into positions of political and economic authority. However, there is still work to be done and some countries are falling behind their neighbors. For example, in many other regions, little progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality ratios mostly because emergency obstetrical care is still not available outside major urban centers," she said.

Ms. De Fillipo also described challenges for gender equality development in the region such as gender-based violence, limited access to sexual and reproductive health services and unsafe abortion. She stressed that Asia and the Pacific had not made significant inroads to reduce maternal mortality and the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, the policy frameworks in the region had changed to reflect the ICPD agenda, particularly in women's education, gender equality and legal reform. "Country commitments need to be enacted and efforts doubled to make gender equality, and universal access to sexual and reproductive health services a reality," she added.

The session was chaired by Dr. Sang Guowei, MP (China) and AFPPD Vice-Chairperson.

Panel Discussion: Governance in the National Level – Successes and Barriers Across the Region

Dr. Myoung Ock Ahn, MP (South Korea); Ms. Claire Moore, Senator (Australia); Hon. Nanaia Mahuta, Minister

of Customs, Minister of Youth Affairs, and Associate Minister for Environment and Local Government (New Zealand); and Ms. Nurlygaim Joldasbayeva, Senator (Kazakhstan); shared the experiences from their own countries on gender-responsive governance in a panel discussion on "Governance at the National Level – Successes and Barriers Across the Region".

Concurrent workshops: Strategies for encouraging women into governance

Hon. Lianne Dalziel spoke on the strategies for encouraging women into governance.

The ministers and parliamentarians joined one of the three concurrent workshops on gender analysis, women's action plan, and census of women's participation in governance and political life; and later reported and exchanged the results from each workshop in a plenary discussion.

Capacity building for governance in the community level

Ms. Ria Earp, Deputy Director-General, Maori Health, Ministry of Health (New Zealand), spoke on capacity building for gender governance in the community level. She cited the New Zealand experience in governance at the community level for the health care services of the Maori community.

Globalization and economic empowerment of women in Asia and the Pacific

Dr. Meutia Hatta Swasono, Minister of Women Empowerment (Indonesia), said that women had an important role in the era of globalization. "The challenges that women are facing today in most Asia and the Pacific countries remain complex: poverty, unemployment, low level of education, low status of health and lack of social protection. In Indonesia, the challenges becomes more difficult and complex on the account of the increasing

prevalence of violence and abuse, including trafficking," she said.

"We should recognize the contributions of women, either as workers in the informal sector, as entrepreneurs, as investors or as unpaid workers to the economies of Asia and the Pacific. Women today are active in the labor force. In Indonesia, for example, around 60 percent of the micro-businesses are managed by women and 76 percent of the migrant workers are women. They have a significant potential capacity to contribute to the economic development. This potential contribution of women to education, to quality of life and industrial progress, and to Asia's export boom has scientifically and empirically been recognized," Dr. Swasono added.

Gender-sensitive budgeting

Rep. Loretta Ann P. Rosales, The Philippines, said that gender-responsive budgeting, as well as auditing, should be a mainstream practice in the entire budgeting and evaluation process. Rep. Rosales said that the Philippines had already achieved laudable gains on gender-responsive governance. "The willingness of the government to allocate resources on gender and development is a sign that the country has reached a certain level of appreciation on the importance of the issue. However, in spite of these and the strong lobbying sector for gender equality and equity, a full institutionalization of integration of gender in development plans and appraisals is still a far reach. Indeed, getting there might take long. What must be ensured is that the call to the realization of gender-responsive governance continues and becomes louder as we go on," she said.

Concurrent workshops: Population and development agenda – Some current policy issues

The ministers and parliamentarians joined the second round of the five concurrent workshops on current policy issues in population and development, namely: sex selection and legislation; gender governance; sexual and reproductive health, and rights; HIV/AIDS, trafficking, early marriage, and adolescent sexual and reproductive health; and male parliamentarians' role in achieving gender equality. The workshops were followed by a plenary session in which the ministers and parliamentarians discussed about the results from each workshop.



From L. to R.: Mrs. Hj. Aisyah Hamid Baidlowi, MP (Indonesia), IFPPD Chair and AFPPD Vice-Chairperson; Prof. Dr. Meutia Hatta Swasono, Minister of Women's Empowerment (Indonesia); Ms. Angelin Sondakh, MP (Indonesia); and Mr. H. Ruz Hanul Ulum, MP (Indonesia)

"Women have important roles in the era of globalization, however, the challenges that women are facing today remain complex."

Dr. Meutia Hatta Swasono

Promoting an integrated approach to prevent violence against women

Hon. Ruth Dyson, Minister of Labour, ACC, Senior Citizens, Disability Issues, Social Development and Employment (New Zealand), spoke on promoting an integrated approach to prevent violence against women. "In league with economic transformation and national identity, family is one of the three core themes of the New Zealand government's commitment to continue the country's transformation to a high-value, knowledge-based economy," she said.

She urged the governments to come up with an integrated approach to prevent violence against women. "There is no disagreement here today that women and family violence are bad – we share a common goal. Violence has a devastating and long-term effects on families and communities," Hon. Dyson added.

NZAID's gender policy and role in promoting gender equality and sustainable development

In his message for the conference, Rt. Hon. Winston Peters, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Racing, Associate Minister for Senior Citizens, and Leader of New Zealand First (New Zealand), spoke on the gender policy of New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency (NZAID), and its role in promoting gender equality and sustainable development. In 2005 and 2006, NZAID had been updating its gender policy to reflect the agency's mandate of poverty elimination, core geographical focus on the Pacific; the global initiative to improve aid effectiveness, recent international commitments including the MDGs; and the evolving international gender equality practice. It is working actively to enhance gender equality and women's representation in governance in the national and regional levels in the Pacific.

Message from Hon. Margaret Wilson, Speaker of the New Zealand Parliament

Due to the terrible weather, Hon. Margaret Wilson could not come to deliver a speech in the conference. In her statement, she said, "Much progress have been made in this region but we still have much to do to advance the goals of equality, human rights, development and peace."

She also urged the ministers and parliamentarians to take up the

challenges on population and development. "Certainly, it is so encouraging to see women here from so many parts of the Asia-Pacific region who have broken through many barriers, and who, through initiatives such as this meeting, can share their leadership and experience, and build strong and strategic partnerships that will ultimately help the people who have elected them," Hon. Wilson said.

New Zealand has strong commitment to population and development,

Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, the Prime Minister of New Zealand

Rt. Hon. Helen Clark provided a closing address. She highlighted the need for access to reproductive health rights and warned of the negative consequences brought by the absence of such access. "The consequences are long-term population and reproductive health problems such as gender inequality, high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, and of HIV/AIDS, as well as delayed social and economic development", she said.

"New Zealand had a strong commitment to international frameworks on population and development. This partnership enables us to honor the commitment made at Cairo in 1994 by placing a high priority on the right to sexual and reproductive health services- to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, education for all, and gender equality," Rt. Hon. Clark said, adding that, "New Zealand remains a strong supporter of the United Nations Population Fund and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. We are providing an increasing amount of resources to both of these international population agencies (in 2005 over NZ\$6 million to UNFPA and NZ\$1.3 million to IPPF)."

"Women's participation in the decision-making process in every level would be the key in achieving gender equality and good governance."

Mr. Sultan Aziz



Right: Mr. Najib Assifi, UNFPA Representative and CST Director, UNFPA Sub-Regional Office (Fiji), is addressing the conference on behalf of Mr. Sultan Aziz, Asia-Pacific Division Director, UNFPA

Attitude and cultural changes to foster women's participation are needed, Mr. Sultan Aziz, Director, Asia and the Pacific Division, UNFPA

In his message presented by Mr. Najib Assifi, UNFPA Representative and CST Director, UNFPA Sub-regional Office (Fiji); Mr. Sultan Aziz, Asia-Pacific Division Director, UNFPA, stressed that women's participation in the decision-making process in every level would be the key to achieve gender equality and good governance.

Mr. Aziz also called upon male parliamentarians to tackle these issues and underscored some possible changes in the basic legislation and the mindset of the entire society. "Women parliamentarians alone cannot make the systemic changes necessary to empower women, they need the support of male colleagues. Constitutional change is necessary to enshrine women's equality and to have a strategic plan for gender mainstreaming throughout the governments and public institutions," he said.

He added, "Legislation alone is not enough. There is a need for attitudinal and cultural change throughout the society in general to foster the participation of women in all aspects of economic, social and political life. Education and training of women are key to their empowerment. Women parliamentarians in developed countries must be educated on the reality of the lives of the women in developing countries."

4th Asian-Pacific Women Parliamentarians' and Ministers' Conference Plan of Action

Preamble

Recognizing the cultural, religious, social and economic diversity of our unique region; and also our shared commitment to the elimination of poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; and the need for political will and leadership. We, the parliamentarians and ministers from 30 countries in Asia and the Pacific, call on all parliamentarians in our region to:

Commit to our responsibility as representatives of the people to show leadership, and build strong and strategic partnerships; including those with NGOs and civil society, and parliamentarians across the region.

Recognize the right to health, and that women and girls in the region bear a disproportionate burden of many of the region's health and development issues; including the increasing impact in the region of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, maternal mortality, child marriage, and lack of equitable access to education, social and economic development

initiatives.

Recognize that the inclusion of women in all levels of governance is the key to address these issues: equality, sustainable and equitable development, and peace and security for everybody.

Recognize that the role of women is essential in decision-making in all levels of the society, as their ability to make decisions about their individual lives, and in particular, their sexual and reproductive health in order to enable them to make real changes in their lives and the lives of future generations.

Recognize the importance of educating and encouraging men to be aware of the issues of power imbalances between men and women in all levels of decision-making, and also recognize that men's support for women's participation in governance and decision-making is essential in all levels of individual and national development.

Recognize that the epidemic levels of violence against women impact on every aspect of their lives and those of their children, and this must be urgently addressed in both national and individual levels, in partnership with men.

Recognize that the governance in national and local levels should address many barriers to women's health, well-being and full participation both within the family and the society, and should consequently consider the gender impact of all policies and strategies on both women and men, and on the issues critically important to this region.

Recognize that culture, history and tradition, and gender roles shape our lives and may support or inhibit women's empowerment, noting that social and economic empowerment of women does not mean disempowerment of men, but that both are strong – different but equal – and able to participate.

Commitment

The ministers and parliamentarians at the 4th Asian-Pacific Women Parliamentarians' and Ministers' Conference adopted the Plan of Action that features the following commitment.

"Being profoundly concerned by these issues, and building on the resolutions/discussions of the three previous AFPPD conferences for women parliamentarians; we commit individually and collectively to report back to our parliamentary colleagues on the issues of this meeting, and to raise awareness and show leadership of women's issues, including the need for increased gender responsiveness in our countries by advocating for the development and resourcing of evidence-based strategies and governance; through strategies such as:

Improved access to current sex-disaggregated data and research related to women.

Setting of benchmarks by which progress can be measured, including MDG indicators and targets.

Use of gender analysis in planning of the policies, legislation and budgets, and adequate resourcing of the strategies to improve women's health, safety and

wellbeing, education, and development.

Development of specific cross-government women's action plans in order to maximize women's social and economic participation.

Increased opportunities for leadership and representation of women on decision-making bodies in the government, business and community.

Paying significant attention to the needs and participation of rural women.

Involving young people in the education of sexual and reproductive health, social and economic participation and decision-making, and in supporting young women in political and public life.

Developing a women's parliamentary caucus or strengthening its role where they already exist.

Developing a resourced cross-party parliamentarians' group for population and development to initiate change and monitor progress wherever they do not exist.

Implementing comprehensive health, education, and information strategies related to sexual and reproductive health; including HIV/AIDS and other issues such as drug use, in order to promote health, wellbeing and self-esteem.

Implementation of the UN convention and protocols, and anti-trafficking laws; including strengthening regional cooperation particularly in relation to repatriation and rehabilitation of victims.

Proactive policies to prevent sex selection, child marriage, human trafficking, fake marriage and forced labor.

Ensuring donor country decisions are informed by the commitments in this plan of action, by the views of women in the parliaments of the recipient countries, and harmonized and coordinated to ensure fair and equitable delivery of aid.

Analysis of the impact of globalization on women, international trade rules and policy in particular.

We also call upon AFPPD to support us in this work through:

Collection and distribution of research, data and practical tools related to women's health, wellbeing and participation in governance.

Development of a political mentoring scheme for women in governance.

Continued support for women parliamentarians and continuation of parliamentarians' groups for population and development."

PhotoGallery



Parliamentarians from Thailand. L. to R.: Ms. Maleerat Kaewka, Senator; and Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit, Senator and AFPPD Secretary-General



Parliamentarians and ministers at the Parliament of New Zealand



Parliamentarians from Cambodia. L. to R.: Mrs. Ho Naun, MP; Princess Sisiwath Santa, MP; and Mrs. You Ay, Secretary of State, Ministry of Women's Affairs



Parliamentarians from China. L. to R.: Dr. Sang Guowei, MP and AFPPD Vice-Chairperson; Mrs. Pang Lijuan, MP; Mrs. Fang Xin, MP; and Mrs. Sen Song, Parliamentary Official



From L. to R.: Sen. Lyn Allison, Australia; Sen. Claire Moore, Australia, and Sen. Nurliygaim Joldasbayeva, Kazakhstan, during the panel discussion on "Governance at the National Level – Successes and Barriers Across the Region".



From L. to R.: Mrs. Effat Shariati Kohbanani, MP (Iran); and Mrs. Mrs. Fatemeh Ajourloo, MP (Iran)



Parliamentarians from Tajikistan



From L. to R.: Dr. Myoung Ock Ahn, MP (South Korea); Hon. Nanaia Mahuta, Minister of Customs, Minister of Youth Affairs, and Associate Minister for Environment and Local Government (New Zealand); and Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, MP (Samoa), during the panel discussion on "Governance at the National Level – Successes and Barriers Across the Region".

World Population Day with a Focus on Young People



World Population Day in Bangkok, Thailand

The United Nations marked the 2006 World Population Day on July 11, 2006 by focusing on the world's three billion young people, calling for narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. Dr. Thoraya Obaid, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director, said millions of young people were threatened by poverty, illiteracy, risks of pregnancy and childbirth, and HIV/AIDS. "Today, more than 500 million people aged 15 to 24 live on less than \$2 per day; 96 million young women in developing countries do not know how to read or write; and 14 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 become mothers every year. Every day, 6,000 young people are newly infected with HIV. These challenges lie in the heart of the goals set by the world leaders to reduce poverty, and improve health and

National parliamentary committees on population and development, and UNFPA country offices across Asia and the Pacific held activities to mark the significance of population and development policy on that day.

Some highlights:

Indonesia – Indonesian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IFPPD), in cooperation with IFPPD West Kalimantan and UNFPA, held a seminar to celebrate the World Population Day with the theme "The Spirit of ICPD Plan of Action into Regional Regulation on Population" in West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. Dr. Siswanto Agus Wilopo, a well-known ICPD expert, discussed to 15 West Kalimantan parliamentarians about the importance of

well-being. It is clear that the Millennium Development Goals will never be met unless young people are actively involve in policy-making and programming; that their voices are heard, their needs are met and their human rights are respected," she added.

the regional regulation and the ICPD Programme of Action.

New Zealand – Around 200 people attended the "MAKE POVERTY HISTORY" event held at the Parliament in Wellington to mark the World Population Day in New Zealand. Hosted by Ms. Steve Chadwick, MP, NZPPD Chair and AFPPD Standing Committee on Women Chair, the event was an opportunity for the people to hear Mr. Simon Townsley, an internationally acclaimed photographer, to discuss his recent work and to tell heart-wrenching personal stories about people living in poverty. The event was organized by the NZPPD Secretariat, the FPAID and the Wellington Photographic Society.

Thailand – UNFPA collaborated with the Department of Health, the Ministry of Public Health and the College of Public Health, Chulalongkorn University to mark the 2006 World Population Day with a public meeting entitled, "Being Young Is Tough." The July 12 event, which took place at the Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, highlighted young people's energy, ideas and potential to make a difference. Youth representatives from various backgrounds participated in a wide-ranging panel discussion; covering topics such as casual sex, unwanted pregnancy and abortion, and poverty. Panelists from different parts of the country spoke about gender inequality in traditional ethnic societies, impact of violence on youth, youth migration and bias faced by the youth from the communities known for drug abuse.

Health, Population, and Development Policy in Laos

Pre-session Parliamentary Review Workshop

Existing legislative process and the role of the Lao National Assembly in fostering the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2006-2010, and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were discussed in Vientiane, Laos on June 5-7, 2006 in a pre-session workshop for the Laotian National Assembly members.

The legislative process discussed on the first day of the workshop shed light on the legislative-executive relations and on the representative roles of the Members of the Assembly (MAs), and also pinpointed the need of a strong legislature for government stability.

During the panel presentations and discussions on the second day of the workshop, prominent speakers discussed about Millennium Declaration and MDGs, and the role of the parliamentarians in achieving the MDGs. They also talked about the 6th National Plan for the Lao PDR, and on the sector issues for the achievement of MDGs and implementation of the education sector of the National Plan. Among the speakers were Ms. Olivia Yambi, UN Resident Coordinator; Mr. Visieth Svengsuksa of the Lao National Assembly; Hon. Kabir Hashim, MP (Sri Lanka); H.E. Dr. Lien Thiako, Vice-President of the Committee for Planning and Investment (CPI); and Ms.

Setsuko Yamazaki, UNDP Resident Representative.

The final day of the workshop discussed about the health sector of the National Plan, population and development policy, and data and monitoring. Finally, the pre-session workshop concluded with advocating the role of the project on strengthening the Lao National Assembly. On the occasion, H.E. Dr. Saysomphone Phomvihane, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Lao Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (LAPPD) made the closing remarks.



Central Asian Regional Parliamentarians' Meeting on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health



From L. to R.: Mr. Khaled Philby, Regional Director of UNFPA for Central Asia; Hon. Marat Sultavov, Speaker of the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan; Hon. Felix Kulov, Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan; Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit, Senator (Thailand) and Secretary-General of AFPPD; and Mr. Osmanbek Artykbaev, MP and Chairman of the National Committee of Kyrgyzstan Parliamentarians on Population and Development

AFPPD in collaboration with the National Committee of Kyrgyzstan Parliamentarians on Population and Development, the UNFPA, and the Government of Japan organized the Central Asian Parliamentarians' Meeting on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on June 27-28, 2006. The conference was aimed in highlighting youth-related health issues such as reproductive health, sexual health, HIV/AIDS, gender equality and violence against women. Parliamentarians from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Thailand attended the meeting.

Young people are our prominent future

"We must take care of our young people as they are the builders of our prominent future," Hon. Felix Kulov, Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, stressed during his welcome address.

He noted that the well-being of any nation depended on how well the population development issues were dealt in the country. "As one scientist said, a nation with a population of 5 million people is a very fragile nation. Accordingly, country programmes and strategic documents against HIV/AIDS have been formulated and actively implemented to solve the reproductive health issues of the adolescents in Kyrgyzstan," he said.

Legislative reform is an answer

Mr. Osmanbek Artykbaev, MP and Chairman of the National Committee of Kyrgyzstan Parliamentarians on Population and Development, in his welcome address, said that the idea of the meeting was to define the basic

problems of the young people of the Central Asian region; to join efforts of the members of the parliament to improve public health services, and population and development issues; and to implement the rights of the young people to sexual and reproductive health by means of reforming the legislation.

Solidarity – as a key to resolve youth health issues



Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit and Mr. Osmanbek Artykbaev

Hon. Marat Sultavov, Speaker of the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan, in his opening speech, underlined the role of the parliamentarians in solving population-related problems and noted that these issues should be resolved in solidarity with all the parliamentarians of the region. "The National Committee of Kyrgyzstan Parliamentarians on Population and Development has been very active in approaching sexual and reproductive health problems of the young people, HIV/AIDS, and gender equality," he said.

He also underlined the essential role of the AFPPD in promoting activities related to poverty alleviation, reproductive

health, gender equality and violence against women in the Asia – Pacific region.

Mobilization of the Central Asian parliamentarians is a high priority

Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit, Senator (Thailand) and Secretary General of AFPPD, stressed the importance of reproductive health issues in Central Asia. "I am also happy to note that the Central Asian countries responded very well and have been quite active," she said.

Moreover, AFPPD's involvement had helped in promoting ICPD issues among parliamentarians. Further work would be realized to mobilize the parliamentarians of the region by conducting person-to-person advocacy on population-related issues; meeting members of the parliament individually and discussing population-related issues on topics such as reproductive and sexual health, violence against women, and HIV/AIDS. "In Central Asia, with the support from UNFPA regional and country offices, we have been able to mobilize a good number of parliamentarians and now they are champions of this cause," Dr. Sukavejworakit added.

"Person-to-person advocacy to mobilize parliamentarians of this region"

Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit

Needs of the youth should come first

Mr. Khaled Philby, Regional Director of UNFPA for Central Asia, pointed out that primary attention should be given to the needs of the young people in solving reproductive health and HIV/AIDS problems. He also noted that the meeting was also a landmark event as it represented the results of a dedicated and effective partnership between parliamentarians and the UNFPA in understanding the needs and giving a voice to the young generations. "This meeting will bring better focus to the needs of the young people and encourage their participation in the decision making of their reproductive and sexual health", he underlined.

He stressed that the meeting also tackled the issues related to HIV/AIDS

“Primary attention should be given to the needs of the young people in solving reproductive health and HIV/AIDS problems.”

Mr. Khaled Philby



Mr. Khaled Philby

and their impact on the young population. Moreover, it also helped in giving more voices to the girls and the young women for the expression of their needs and rights. “We will work together over these two days and share our experiences and expectations. UNFPA, parliamentarians, government officials, international organizations and NGOs will put forward their best practices and lessons learned. In this meeting, we will also give a chance to the young people to raise their voices and help us find solutions to their problems”, he concluded.

Seeking the rights of the adolescents

Mr. Maripov Asamidin Maripovich, Vice Chairman of the Committee on Social Issues of the Kyrgyzstan Parliament, spoke on the needs of the youth and the adolescents in the field of reproductive and sexual health in the first session. He stressed that out of all human rights recognized by the global community, gender equality, right to education and right to health were especially acute to the young generation. “Realization of the right to health requires access to adequate and corresponding-to-the-age opportunity, circumstances, information, and services in the sphere of sexual and reproductive health”, he said.

We are the partners of the youth and the adults

Ms. Salieva Saltanat, Member of the Youth Committee of International Family Planning Association (YCIFPA) of Kyrgyzstan, stressed the importance of today’s adolescence issues. “Risk behavior, unwanted pregnancies, drug abuse, poor nutrition, violence and legal exposure, these are the realities of the

current adolescent and youth issues,” she said.

Young people do not seek health care

Ms. Kangeldieva Aigul, Director of the Kyrgyz Scientific Center of Human Reproduction (KCOHR) of Kyrgyzstan, spoke on the growing trend in which young people tended not to seek medical advice from health care professionals.

Legal basis exists to deal with health problems

Speaking in the second session on the future direction of the participation of young people in the decision-making process on reproductive and sexual health was led by Mr. Beksultan S. Tutkushev, Senator (Kazakhstan) and Deputy Secretary-General of AFPPD; Mr. Mamyrov Erkinbek, State-Secretary of the Ministry of Justice of Kyrgyzstan, shed light on the existing legal basis to deal with health problems. He emphasized the existing laws in the Family Code and Labor Code of Kyrgyzstan.



Mr. Beksultan S. Tutkushev, Senator (Kazakhstan) and Deputy Secretary-General of AFPPD

Youth and modern life

Dr. Kerimova Natalia, Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Perinatology Association of Kyrgyzstan, spoke on the impacts of the modern conditions on reproductive health of the adolescents. She noted that starting from 2001, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS had been gradually increasing and to date, about 4,000 people were living with the virus. “Fifty-two percent of these people are adolescents among 15-21 years of age. Heroin addiction is another

issue that inflicts many young people, women and children,” she said.

Adolescent health issues under USAID strategy consideration

Dr. Damira Bibosunova, from the USAID/ CAR of Kyrgyzstan, talked about the USAID strategy to improve legislative, regulatory and policy framework, and to improve the health care of the population; including infectious diseases, maternal and child health, population involvement, and rational use of resources.

It is time to educate the youth

In the session on HIV/AIDS, youth and adolescents which was led by Mr. Isachkin, MP (Belarus); Mr. Niazov Shailobek, Minister of the Public Health of Kyrgyzstan, spoke on the significance of HIV/AIDS education of the youth. He said that as in other countries, among different infectious diseases such as acute intestinal infection, tuberculosis, and hepatitis; sexually transmitted diseases were of significant weight in Kyrgyzstan.

Struggle against narcotics and HIV/AIDS

Mr. Isakov Timur, Head of the Service Department, Drugs Control Agency of Kyrgyzstan, said that we needed a general plan for the struggle against narcotics and HIV/AIDS. He described the war against social and biological epidemics as follows, “The present war is different. Two components are united by a regular syringe and this coupling is said to be mortally strong.”

Action plan towards promoting gender equality in Tajikistan

In the session on gender equality and expansion of opportunities of girls and women which was moderated by Mr. Tekebaev Omurbek, Member of the National Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development of Kyrgyzstan; Mr. Salimov Olim, Vice Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs, Public Organizations and Information of Tajikistan, spoke on the action plan towards promoting gender equality in Tajikistan.

Gender equality issues on agenda

Ms. Niazova Anara, a special Representative of the President of Kyrgyzstan on Gender Development, pointed out that special emphasis was required on the issues of women rights protection and on achieving international legal standards in the area.



Preventive education

In the session on education and development for the adolescents and sexual health which was moderated by Mr. Salimov O. S., MP (Tajikistan); Mr. Dosbol Nur Uuulu, Minister of Education, Science and Culture of the Kyrgyzstan, spoke on educating the youth to effectively cope with the



Mr. Omurbek Tekebaev, MP and Member of the National Committee of Kyrgyzstan Parliamentarians on Population and Development

existing problems of reproductive and sexual health, gender equality, violence against women and HIV/AIDS. "For the meantime, the most effective measure to strengthen reproductive health is preventive education. Most targeted and prioritized group in Kyrgyzstan to conduct prophylactic work with are the adolescents and the youth from age 10 to 25. A significant part of this group can be covered by prophylactic programmes through educational system," he said.

Open reproductive health for the society

Ms. Chirkina Galina, Executive Director of the Reproductive Health Alliance of Kyrgyzstan, spoke on the rapidly changing social climate in the region. She said teenagers and children had been most vulnerable at the age of 10 to 15.

On the way to enhance actions

In the session on the role of the parliamentarians and their positive experiences in the protection of the

rights and interests of the youth and the adolescents in the field of reproductive and sexual health which was moderated by Mr. Shmelev A. K., MP (Belarus); Mr. Isaachkin Victor, Deputy Chairman of the Commission on Law and Justice of Belarus, spoke on the interplay between the dynamics of population and the development in

Belarus. Mr. Omurbek Tekebaev, MP and Member of the National Committee of Kyrgyzstan Parliamentarians on Population and Development, said that in several years there would be tangible achievements on reproductive health issues of population, HIV/AIDS and gender equality in Kyrgyzstan.

Bishkek Declaration – towards the achievement of the ICPD goals

Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director of AFPPD, moderated the session dedicated to the discussion and the adoption of the Bishkek Declaration. The parliamentarians from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia,

Tajikistan and Thailand recognized the necessity to take into account reproductive and sexual health problems, and their importance to the

youth; and agreed upon unifying the efforts to deal with the above-mentioned issues.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit, Senator (Thailand) and Secretary-General of AFPPD

"I am really impressed with the energy shown by the parliamentarians during the discussions where good numbers of questions were asked. Some of them generated some heat. I feel comfortable with the quality and level of knowledge, and now, one thing to do is to get into action and monitor the programme closely, which is lacking in our countries. We assure you that this meeting has given AFPPD the encouragement to enhance its work in the region," she said on her closing speech of the meeting.

Mr. Khaled Philby, Regional Director for Central Asia of UNFPA, noted that the meeting became an important and starting one for other countries in Central Asia to further solve problems related to reproductive health, gender equality and violence against women, which were of great importance in the region.



Mr. Erkinbek Alimbekov, Vice-Speaker of the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan

Mr. Erkinbek Alimbekov, Vice Speaker of the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan, said that the Bishkek Declaration obliged the participating parliamentarians to further promote actions to reform and adopt legislative measures towards the health problems of the young generation.

Mr. Osmanbek Artykbaev, MP and Chairman of the National Committee of Kyrgyzstan Parliamentarians on Population and Development, highlighted the success of the meeting and said that the parliamentarians, in cooperation with AFPPD and international organizations such as the UNFPA, the UNDP, and the USAID, as well as the NGOs and the government agencies; had discussed about adolescent reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and gender equality issues, and had adopted the declaration that would be a guiding factor in planning future programme of action in the region.

Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director of AFPPD, assured continued inputs to enhance parliamentarians' activities.

HIV/AIDS Advocacy

AFPPD at G8 the Parliamentarians' Conference on HIV/AIDS in Moscow

The Russian State Duma Interfactual Deputies' Working Group on HIV/AIDS, the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on AIDS, the Transatlantic Partners Against AIDS (TPAA), and the Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (IEPPFD) organized a collaborative conference entitled, "HIV/AIDS In Eurasia and the Role of the G8", on June 8, 2006 at the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. The conference focused the attention of the parliamentarians from the G8 countries; and China, India, and the CIS countries, on the growing challenges presented by the surging HIV/AIDS epidemics and their global implications. The conference also

identified further opportunities for collaboration in the fight against HIV/AIDS, both regionally and globally.

Up to 50 senior parliamentarians and officials from the G8 and the Eurasian countries, as well as representatives from international organizations contributing to the development of national, regional and international HIV/AIDS policy, attended the conference. AFPPD was represented by Mr. Li Honggui, MP (China); Dr. Ahmad Khas Ahmadi, MP (Iran); and Datu Dr. Rahman Ismail, MP (Malaysia). The event had further enhanced the political advocacy for HIV/AIDS in the region.

Parliamentarians at the Global Fund Partnership Forum

Parliamentarians and other partners of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria attended the second Global Fund Partnership Forum event, held on July 1-3, 2006, in Durban, South Africa. The theme of the Partnership Forum 2006 was "Overcoming Challenges and Celebrating Success". After four years of operations, the Global Fund took time to reflect on its progress by reaching out and consulting to the stakeholders, including those who were not part of its governance structures and those who had not received grants.

The Partnership Forum is a public forum for supporting and improving the effectiveness of the Global Fund. Its function is to play a major role in influencing the vision of the Global Fund – to be an effective global public-private partnership that makes a sustainable and significant contribution to the reduction of infection, illness and death from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

The main discussions at the Partnership Forum focused on the architecture of the Global Fund; acceleration of grant performance; harmonization of grants with national priorities and other development partners; and sustainability of the Global Fund model and its funding. Participants had the opportunity to make recommendations which would be presented to the Global Fund Board at its meeting on November 2006. It was hoped that these recommendations would also inform and feed into the discussions on the Global Fund strategy.

Four parliamentarians from AFPPD – Prof. Tran Dong A, MP (Vietnam), Dr. Hakim Sorimuda Pohan, MP (Indonesia), Mr. Lambaa Sambuu, MP (Mongolia), and Dr. Ahn Myoung Ock, MP (South Korea) - participated in the forum. In 2004 the Global Fund held its first Partnership Forum in Bangkok, Thailand. In their report, the parliamentarians emphasized the need for regular feedbacks on the Global Fund's actions to the parliament so that they could monitor the implementation of the programmes and provide all possible supports.

Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn Visits Japan



From L. to R.: Dr. Taro Nakayama, MP (Japan); Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn, former AFPPD Secretary-General; and Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, MP (Japan) and AFPPD Chairman

Prof. Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn, a founding member and former AFPPD Secretary-General, was on an official visit to Japan from July 2-5, 2006. Dr. Ratanakorn, Secretary-General of the International Medical Parliamentarians' Organization

(IMPO) and President of the General Prem Tinsulanonda Statesman Foundation (Thailand), also paid visits to the following MPs of Japan: Dr. Taro Nakayama, IMPO President; Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, AFPPD Chairman; Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, former AFPPD Chairman; and Mr. Shin Sakurai, also a former AFPPD Chairman. He discussed about the 25th anniversary of AFPPD and the future programmes of the medical parliamentarians.

US About to Have 300 Million Americans- Adding 2.8 Million Each Year

The Associated Press reported that the United States population is on the fast lane towards 300 million, with an increase of 2.8 million each year.

The growth is producing headaches for Americans who are fed up with traffic congestion, sprawl and dwindling natural resources. This scenario is starkly different from the population decline in other industrialized countries, which are on the verge of big population losses, such as Japan and those in Europe.

The US Census Bureau projects that the US population will hit 300 million sometime in October and, by 2050, the United States is projected to have about 420 million people. The number of people have been doubling about every half of a century, from 75 million in 1900 to 150 million in 1950.

"Europe and Japan are now facing a population problem that is unprecedented in human history - declining population over time with an increase in the percentage of old people," said Mr. Bill Butz, President of the Population Reference Bureau, a Washington think tank.

The U.S. is the fastest growing industrialized nation in the world, adding about 2.8 million people a year. That's a little less than one percent, but enough to mitigate the kinds of problem face by Japan and many European countries.

A USA Today/Gallup Poll found that 39 percent of adults think that US population growth is a major problem and 57 percent think that it will be a major problem in the future.

Erratum

In the article, "Report on Laws and Policies on Reproductive Health and Rights", on page 10 of our November-December 2005 newsletter, we failed to state that the report was a joint collaboration between the Center for Reproductive Rights, the Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Center for Women (ARROW), and four other non-governmental organizations and

institutions based in the region – the Population Research Institute at Renmin University in China, the Institute for Social Studies and Action (ISSA) in the Philippines, the Women's Health Advocacy Foundation (WHAF) in Thailand, and the Research Center for Gender, Family, and Development (CGFED) in Vietnam. Our apologies for any inconvenience caused by this error.

IPPF Regional Council Discusses Working with Parliamentarians



Opening Ceremony of the IPPF-ESEAOR Regional Council Meeting

The International Planned Parenthood Federation, East & South-East Asia and Oceania Region (IPPF-ESEAOR) Regional Council met on July 28-29, 2006 in Chiang Mai, Thailand under the chairmanship of Prof. Ho Pak Chung, Regional Chairperson of IPPF-ESEAOR. It was addressed by Dr. Steven Sinding, Director-General of IPPF, and Dr. Metee Pongkittilah, Director of Reproductive Health Division, Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health (Thailand).

Ms. Sumie Ishii, Executive Director of Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICEF), spoke on networking, partnership and opportunities for resources mobilization. Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director of AFPPD, gave a presentation on ways and means to work with parliamentarians. He also narrated the background of IPPF and AFPPD

cooperation since the latter's formation, and the advantages of having the parliamentarians on their sides. He advised that the state-level and locally elected officials, and the women parliamentarians could be the targets of their advocacy.

Mr. Tony Bates, Regional Programme Advisor of UNAIDS RST Asia Pacific, talked about how Technical Support Facility (TSF) for South-East Asia and the Pacific, which had been awarded to IPPF-ESEAOR by UNAIDS, would be able to provide technical assistance to governments and NGOs in the region.

The Regional Council also gave a very emotional farewell to Dr. Steven Sinding who will leave IPPF by September. He will be succeeded by Dr. Gill Greer, Asia-Pacific Alliance Chair and Family Planning Association of New Zealand Executive Director.

Nepalese Population Committee Reconstructed

Nepal has a new Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Affairs under the chairmanship of Hon. Birodh Khatiwada, MP. The committee has 18 members, including one woman member.

PGPD Roundtable on SRH in Australia's Aid

The Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD) will hold roundtable sessions on "Sexual and Reproductive Health, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Australian Aid Programme – The Way Forward" on August 14, 2006 and September 11, 2006. The purpose of the discussions is to raise awareness within the Australian Parliament about how improved sexual and reproductive health (SRH) underpins all of the MDGs. The outcome of the discussions is to identify PGPD's future international advocacy priorities. The sessions will include discussions on family planning, HIV/AIDS, maternal health, environmental degradation, adolescent health, men's SRH, micro-bicides, and SRH in conflict and emergency settings.

Upcoming AFPPD Event

- Third International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, November 21-22, Bangkok, Thailand

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