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FORUM NEWSLETTER

Publication of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

NPC China Hosts AFPPD's 20 Year's Celebration

Founding Members and Others Honoured

7th General Assembly Gives New Direction

Beijing - 17th -18th October. The Great Hall of People and the Beijing Hotel in China where AFPPD was born twenty-one years ago was again the venue of AFPPD's 7th General Assembly and 20 Year's Celebration. Many founding members, the majority of them now retired, came from all over the world as well as from China to commemorate the Asian Forum's twenty years of useful work.

The seminar on Asian Population and Development, the first part of the meeting, discussed the interrelationship of population and development, and pledged to respond to those who feel that sustainable development is possible without focus on population. The impact of HIV/AIDS related legislation and the role of parliamentarians was debated in depth as were gender issues and the enhanced participation of women parliamentarians. Finally, seminar participants reviewed the governance of population programmes in the region. The seminar proved to be very useful and resulted in some lively debates.

The 7th General Assembly, the second part of the meeting, reviewed AFPPD's work over the last three years, and then

debated and adopted the programme for the next three years. The statement of accounts were also scrutinised and accepted. Lastly, and perhaps the high-light of the General Assembly, was the election of AFPPD's office bearers.

The assembly, which was hosted by the National People's Congress of China and opened by **Mme. Peng Peiyun**, Vice-Chair of NPC, was attended by more than one hundred and eighty parliamentarians from twenty-eight countries from the Asia Pacific and CIS regions. Representatives from UNFPA, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNAIDS, ILO, WHO, IPPF, Partners in Population and Development, World Bank Network, FAAPPD, IEPFPD, ASAP, and ESCPH were also present. Parliamentarians and UNFPA representatives who helped to found AFPPD included; **Mr. Colin Hollis**, former Secretary General AFPPD; **Mr. Hirofumi Ando**, Professor, Japan; **Mr. Jyoti Singh**, former Deputy Executive Director UNFPA; **Mr. Tsuguo Hirose**, Executive Director APDA; **Dr. Ranjit Atapattu**, Chairman of the Advisory Council to the Minister of Health, Sri Lanka; **Mr. Akio Matsumura**, USA; **Prof. Prasop Ratanakorn**, former Secretary General of AFPPD; and **Mme. Nguyen Thi Than**

former Treasurer of AFPPD. Special guests from China included **Mr. Fei Xiatong**; **Mr. Wu Jieping**; **Mrs. Lin Liyun**; **Mr. Bai Jiefu**; **Mrs. Yan Renying**; **Mrs. Lin Jiamei**; **Mrs. He Liliang**; **Mrs. Li Xiuzhen**; **Mr. Li Chengrui**; **Mr. Yu Wang**; **Mr. Shi Guobao**; Three Chinese founding fathers who attended were **Mr. Huang Hua**, **Mr. Hu Keshi**, and **Mr. Wang Wei**.



Opening Session of AFPPD's 7th General Assembly and 20 Year's Celebration on the theme of Asian Population and Development in the 21st Century. L. to R: Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP Japan and Chairman of AFPPD - Mme. Peng Peiyun, MP and Vice-Chair of the National People's Congress, (NPC) - Mr. Kunio Waki, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA New York - Dato' Napsiah Binti Omar, MP, Treasurer of AFPPD



Asia Must Step Up Efforts if it Wants to Resolve Population Issues in the Region

Population Issue of Great Concern

Mme. Peng Peiyun, MP, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and one of China's most powerful women, graced the opening of the seminar and 7th General Assembly on Asian Population and Development with her welcome address.



Mme. Peng Peiyun, MP China

She started by saying "Population and sustainable development is an important issue of great concern among all countries in the world today. Asia, with a population of about 60 percent of the world's total, has been one of the regions with the most vigorous economic growth in recent years. Over a long period of time, many Asian countries have concentrated their efforts on

controlling population growth, and actively carried out family planning policies, resulting in relieving the pressure of the excessively rapid growth of population on economic and social development, and creating fairly favourable conditions for the sustainable development of these countries. However, most Asian countries are developing countries, and it is still a very important and arduous task for the Asian people to further solve the problem of population and development. The resolution of this issue depends, first and foremost, on the efforts of the Asian countries and people, and also on the sincere cooperation and mutual support between the governments, parliaments and non-governmental organisations of all Asian countries, as well as all Asian people.

China is a developing country with the biggest population in the world and relatively limited per-capita resources. China has to persist in putting population control, economizing on resources, and environmental protection in an important strategic position to achieve sustainable development. While energetically developing the economy, the Chinese Government has always made it a basic national policy to control the size of the population, improve its quality and implement the family planning programme. Through many years of efforts, China has effectively controlled the excessive growth of its population.

Equality Essential for Social Development

Regarding the equality of men and women as a basic national policy for promoting social development, the Chinese Government has made efforts to eliminate discrimination against women through legal, administrative and educational means, to guarantee, in practice, women's equal rights with men in the areas of politics, economy, culture, society, marriage and family, and promote a healthy and harmonious relationship between men and women.

Impact of the Asian Forum Far-Reaching

The Chairman of AFPPD, Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP Japan, delivered his remarks for the meeting. He gave a brief explanation of AFPPD's work over the years and also shared some of the Forum's success stories with participants.

"The Asian Forum Secretariat has played a very important role in making AFPPD what it is today. We now have more than twenty countries as full members, and have an equal number working with us on a constant basis. Our reach has extended to the CIS countries and we hope to expand further in that part of the world," he said.



Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP Japan

"The number of parliamentarians and observers present today from friendly parliamentary groups and NGOs, is an indication of the growing recognition of AFPPD as an effective tool to mobilise parliamentarians for the population and development cause. A cause which is currently facing some inclement weather from certain quarters. Some feel that without first solving the issue of population, they can still develop the world. This is an unfounded myth, and it is our responsibility to clarify this unrealistic notion.

Our Earth has its Limitations

Asian population, although slowed down, in sheer numbers its increase is quite high. Agricultural output is not keeping pace, and food security is but a dream for many countries. Climate is changing due to over consumption of natural resources for the use of huge population, and there have been bouts of serious flooding and long droughts in areas where they have not been witnessed before. This is an indication that earth has its own limitations and it can not sustain the current population and its continuing growth.

The Forum Shall Remain Dedicated

AFPPD has in twenty years had several success stories. Japanese parliamentarians worked with the Government of Japan to establish the Japan Trust Fund with UNFPA for the provision of one million dollars each year. This has given a tremendous boost to the parliamentary movement worldwide. The Hewlett Foundation has funded a special AFPPD programme, and UNAIDS has also supported some of AFPPD's HIV/AIDS programmes. AFPPD has also initiated Afro-Asian cooperation with the help of the Japan Trust Fund

I am hopeful that AFPPD will continue to grow and will continue to make an impact on the parliaments of the Asia-Pacific and CIS countries," he concluded.

Nearly half the world's major rivers are going dry or are badly polluted. In China, 80 per cent of major rivers are so degraded they no longer support fish life

Progress has been Made in the Population Field

Mr. Kunio Waki, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA, explained some of the hardships currently faced by UNFPA and that in order to successfully address population and development issues, parliamentarians and regional parliamentary networks must pull together and work harder for the cause.

"Just imagine what we have accomplished together in the last twenty years. Asia is home to sixty per cent of the world population, 3.7 billion people.



Mr. Kunio Waki, UNFPA

During the past twenty years, many countries in Asia have managed to progress from high to relatively low fertility, population stabilization, a key ingredient of a real, long-lasting development is quite possible now.

This was only a dream twenty years ago. Through the great strides that have been made since you started your quest,

more of our children are being educated, health has improved dramatically, and we have witnessed an 'economic miracle' in many Asian countries. Here in China, all of see clearly, the progress made.

Our Mission Must Continue

We still have much to do. There is widespread poverty in Asia, reproductive health is still only a dream to many, as is education. The terror of HIV/AIDS has gained a foothold, and is threatening to destroy many of our hard won gains. Water, food, and our environment are in a serious crisis, as Mr. Yatsu just mentioned. We must continue our mission, we can not rest, we must go on.

Population Field Under Threat

The population field is under threat and we, UNFPA, are at a critical stage. You must know that we have another difficulty today, beyond lack of funds, inaction, and complacency. We are opposed by anti-family planning groups, which have extreme right-wing views. They succeeded in stopping US funding for UNFPA. We must deal with this threat, and I believe that the best way we can do this is in the same direction in which AFPPD is now moving.

Important Conference to be Held in Ottawa

The AFPPD, with UNFPA and four other global and regional parliamentary groups, has planned, and will help lead an international parliamentary conference, in November in Ottawa. The purpose of the conference is to address our two biggest challenges in the population field today: Creating an enabling environment in developing countries for the implementation of the Cairo Agenda, and funding from both developing countries and donor countries. Unlike other conferences, we will be sending out report cards on the implementation of the Cairo Agenda. We will all know whatever progress is made in legislation, funding, and political will, as well as unrealized commitments, and reversed courses by governments."

Programme Expansion to Emphasis Population

Ms. Dato Napsiah Binti Omar, MP Malaysia, Acting Secretary General AFPPD, gave a brief report on the Asian Forum. She shared with participants some of the good work conducted by AFPPD, and detailed the effects this work has had in the Asia and Pacific region.

"In the last twenty-one years AFPPD has become an effective organisation accepted from Iran to Mongolia on one side, the Solomon Islands to Fiji on the other, and Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan at the top. AFPPD programmes have reached them, their Parliaments and parliamentarians, they have started, thinking and talking about population, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, empowerment of women, which they seldom did before. My own country, Malaysia, which has no specific population policy recognized the important work of AFPPD and our Prime Minister not only gave office space in the parliament building but also provided financial support.



Mrs. Napsiah Omar, MP Malaysia, AFPPD

AFPPD has expanded its programme areas to emphasize the inter-relations of population over-growth with other development issues such as food security, water, poverty, environment and HIV/AIDS issues. AFPPD raised extra budgetary programme support from the Hewlett Foundation for a unique programme of Person-to-Person Advocacy with Parliamentarians, where each and every parliamentarian will be met, and population and family planning related issues discussed.

Parliamentarians Must Increase Resources

Dr. Zhao Baige, Regional Treasurer, IPPF, and Director of the Foreign Affairs Department of the State Family Planning Commission, China, spoke for Dr. Raj Karim, IPPF, who was unable to attend the meeting. Dr. Zhao urged parliamentarians to encourage their governments to support family planning.



Dr. Zhao Baige, China

"We are in difficult times; IPPF finds itself in extreme financial distress. The unrestricted budget has declined from over a hundred million USD dollars in 1995 to just forty-seven million US dollars in 2003. In the last two years, funds available to IPPF have declined by nearly fifteen million US dollars. These declines come in the face of unprecedented increases in demand for contraception, protection against STDs, measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies, and unsafe abortion. And above all, the demands for effective measures to halt the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

IPPF is not alone in this plight. Donors are also cutting funds to UNFPA and other highly effective international institutions



Many Challenges Remain in Europe

Ms. Sonia Fertuzinhos, MP Portugal, spoke on behalf of the Inter-European Parliamentarians Forum and revealed to participants some of the problems Europe is facing in relation to population and development.

“The European Forum is the youngest regional parliamentary forum addressing population and development issues, and since our creation in the year 2000 we have consistently looked to the Asian Forum as a source of inspiration and a good example to follow.

In our work within the European Forum, we have been active in addressing sexual and reproductive health and rights in developing countries as well as in the countries where we are working. There are many challenges which remain in Europe regarding the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action.

Population issues are fundamental to achieve sustainable development, as well as eradication of poverty is a necessary step towards achieving peace in the World. These two main political action fields have the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights as an essential instrument. We, the parliamentarians of the Asian, the African, the Inter-American and European Forums, have the responsibility of helping governments and parliaments of our countries to strengthen the policies that will promote a more balanced world.”



Mrs. Sonia Fertuzinhos, MP Portugal

Dr. Baige Zhao continued

Parliamentarians must become aware of this crisis in funding and must take steps to reverse this decline. Asian parliamentarians must press the governments in the region to support the IPPF and UNFPA more generously. IPPF has very close working relations with AFPPD

IPPF Exploring Cost-Saving Measures

In order to utilize our scarce resources efficiently and more effectively, IPPF has introduced straight guidelines in our expenditures and cost-saving measures and has explored ways to ensure sustainability of family planning associations and their programmes through strengthening collaboration with other international and national agencies, advocating for increased resources or grants from the national governments.”



Basic Nutrition and Health for All at the Heart of Poverty Reduction

Mr. Jean-Christophe Bas, Pan European Manager, World Bank, gave an interesting speech on the PNoWB, the World Bank's newly established parliamentary network. He emphasised the point that parliamentarians, as agents of change, can greatly assist in the fight against poverty, and that they play a key role on the road to sustainable development.

“Providing poor people with basic health and nutrition lies at the heart of reducing poverty and promoting economic growth. Of the 11 million children who die each year in developing countries, around 70% die from diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria, and malnutrition. The World Bank commits an average of 1.3 billion USD in new lending each year for health, nutrition and population projects. In China for instance, the Bank has helped provide iodised salt to more than 90% of households, ensuring that millions of families will benefit from significantly fewer cases of miscarriages and stillbirths, physical deformity and mental retardation caused by iodine deficiency.



Mr. Jean-Christophe Bas World Bank

Gender Inequality Detrimental to Development

Societies that discriminate by gender pay a high price in terms of their ability to develop and to reduce poverty. To promote gender equality, the World Bank adopted new policy orientations last year emphasizing institutional reforms and active measures to redress persistent gender disparities.

Good Governance the Way to Go

The World Bank has engaged in a depth dialogue with Parliamentarians through the newly created Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB), an independent organization of two hundred MP's from around the world, including Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia and other parts of the World.

Parliamentarians, as legislators and representatives of citizens and particularly representatives of poor people play a key role in development. You are better placed than any other group to understand the needs of the poor and to help the World Bank meeting their expectations and responding better to them. The world has a lot to gain in listening to you. Parliamentarians as ‘informed development activists’ can be and must be the champions in fighting poverty and promoting good governance.”

Did you know?

Worldwide, 75 billion tonnes of topsoil are lost every year. The greatest losses, averaging between 30 and 40 tonnes per hectare, per crop, are in Africa, Asia and Latin America.



HIV/AIDS Biggest Challenge in Africa

Hon. Mr. Ebrahim Saloojee, MP South Africa, 2nd Vice President FAAPPD, reminded everyone that poverty eradication is a prerequisite for improving the quality of life of any nation. He also spoke on the consequences of armed conflict many African and Arab states face.



Hon. Ebrahim Saloojee, MP South Africa, FAAPPD

“Population and development policies and programmes have long been seen in many African countries as attempts by colonial powers to simply curtail the growth of the population. In South Africa, such programmes were in fact based on racist assumptions, aimed not at developmental opportunities for all, but rather in the narrow

interest of the ruling minority. However, now, through workshops, meetings, conferences, and training programmes in population and development at regional, sub-regional, and national level, most countries in the regions have adopted population and development programmes.

Two thirds of all AIDS related deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, African parliamentarians view AIDS as one of the biggest challenges in our efforts to sustainable population development. Various countries in the region have responded with the required urgency to combat this pandemic, but it still poses a major threat to the development of the sub-continent.”

Parliamentarians Play Key Role

Mr. Timothee Gandaho, MD, PhD, Executive Director, Partners in Development based in Dhaka, encouraged parliamentarians to keep population and development high on government agendas. He also praised the Asian Forum for its work in the field.

“Parliamentarians the world over have been instrumental in ensuring that the subject of population and development is high on government agendas, and have called the attention of funding agencies at national, bilateral and multi-lateral



Mr. Timothee Gandaho, PhD Partners in Development

institutions alike. It is therefore true to quote William Ross Wallace that *‘The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.’*

AFPPD has stood the test of time and the challenges posed by the very nature of human kind, to survive and sustain the human race in harmony with the environment, raising a lot of questions with regards to development.”

Reaching the goal of sustainable development is a struggle we all share. Therefore I would like to appeal to your influence to keep population and development high on the political and international agenda.”

Two Executive Committee Meetings in Beijing

AFPPD had two Executive Committee meetings in Beijing. The first was held on the 16th of October before the 7th General Assembly, and approved all documents to be presented at the General Assembly. The second, which took place after the election of the new Executive Committee, approved the programmes, budget, and various other articles related to AFPPD’s work for the next three years. The Executive Committee was chaired by Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP Japan and attended, among others, by Ms. Sonia Fertuzinhos, MP Portugal, and Mr. Neil Datta from the Inter-European Forum, Mr. Ebrahim Saloojee, MP South Africa and Mr. Joseph Atiku from the African and Arab Forum, as well as Mr. Kunio Waki, Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, and Mr. Shu Yun Xu, Director of UNFPA/APD, New York.

The Executive Committee also thanked the National People’s Congress of China for hosting AFPPD’s 7th General Assembly and 20 Year’s Celebration in such grand style.



Back Row L. to R: Mr. Manmohan Sharma, Executive Director, IAPPD, India - Mr. Tsuguo Hirose, Secretary General APDA, Japan - Mr. Roberto Ador, Executive Director, PLCPD Philippines - Dr. Jagannath Munda, MP India - Rep. J. R. Nereus O. Acosta, MP Philippines and Deputy Secretary General of AFPPD - Mme. Nguyen Thi Hoai Thu, MP Vietnam, Vice-Chair AFPPD - Mrs. Kelly Hoare, MP Australia, Member AFPPD - Sen. Beksuultan S. Tutkushev, Kazakhstan, Vice-Chair AFPPD

Front Row L. to R: Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director, AFPPD - Mrs. Napsiah Binti Omar, MP Malaysia and AFPPD Treasurer - Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit, Secretary General AFPPD - Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP Japan and Chairman AFPPD - Mr. Zhang Huaixi, MP China, Vice-Chair AFPPD - Mr. Shu Yun Xu, Director, APD /UNFPA

Collaboration with AFPPD for Asian RH Conference Discussed

The Thai Rak Foundation will help organise the Asian Reproductive Health Conference in 2003. Their three representatives visited the AFPPD office where they met Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit. They visited AFPPD to discuss possible collaboration with the Asian Forum. Dr. Desmond O’Byrne, Chief of Health Promotion, WHO, also visited AFPPD to discuss possible cooperation with the Forum.



Dr. O’Byrne pictured here with Dr. Malinee, (centre), and representatives from the Center for Reproductive Health Alliance



Is Sustainable Development Without Population Focus Possible?



L. to R: Rep. J. R. Nereus O. Acosta, PLCPD - Mr. Li Honggui, MP China, Member of the ESCPH Committee, National People's Congress of China - Mr. Shu Yun Xu, Director, APD / UNFPA - Mr. Jyoti Singh, former Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA, President of Population 2005

Session one, with presentations given by **Mr. Li Honggui**, **Mr. Shu Yun Xu**, and **Mr. Jyoti Shankar Singh**, examined the relationships between development and population issues, and raised the question whether sustainable development, without first considering population issues, was an achievable goal or not. The general consensus was, in fact, population issues have to be solved first before we can work towards sustainable development. **Rep. J. R. Nereus Acosta** moderated the session.

Mr. Li Honggui, MP China, commenced by explaining that the term 'sustainable development' was first used in 'Our Common Future,' a book published in 1987 by the World Environment and Development Committee. The book suggested that 'sustainable development is to meet the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet theirs....'

"Demographic change has affected sustainable development in various ways," he said. "Population size, growth and age structure, and educational, health and socioeconomic characteristics all have an effect on the use of natural resources, so do gender relations and migration patterns.

Demographic Conditions Must be Favourable in Order to Achieve Sustainable Development

Mr. Li Honggui further said, "Coordinated development between population, natural resources, environment and ecology is the essential objective of sustainable development. Population plays a fundamental role in achieving sustainable development. Excessive population, rapid growth of population, and lower quality of human resources are the constraints for sustainable development. Favourable demographic conditions should be created if one nation wants to achieve the goal of sustainable development."

Mr. Shu Yun Xu, Director, APD / UNFPA, felt very strongly on the view that sustainable development is unachievable without first addressing population.

He said "People are the consumers of natural resources that are limited in quantity. The greater the pressure of population, more the mouths to feed and provide with basic amenities such as safe drinking water, housing, sanitation and clothing, not to mention education, livelihood and health care. In countries where poverty levels are acute, literacy levels are low, gender disparities widespread and infrastructure weak, as is the case in several countries of the Asia and Pacific region, an increase in population levels

adds to the miseries of the people, leading to further stressing of the environment and depletion and degradation of natural resources, as people start adopting unsustainable patterns of consumption for short-term benefits. In fact, the issues of population, poverty and environmental deterioration are intimately correlated. For instance, as population grows and cultivable land becomes scarcer, the poorer sections of society cut down forests to grow food or simply for use as fuel-wood. Thus, sustainable development is impossible without a focus on population."

Turning to the role of the UNFPA, Mr. Shu Yun Xu said "UNFPA has consistently affirmed its commitment to reproductive rights, gender equality and male responsibility, universal access to basic education and to the autonomy and empowerment of women everywhere. The Millennium Development Goals provide a powerful tool for addressing population and poverty linkages, especially in national poverty reduction strategies."

Governments Must Reaffirm Their Commitment for Sustainable Development

Mr. Jyoti Shankar Singh, former Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, and President of Population 2005, spoke in depth on the importance of gender and its linkages to sustainable development.

He said "Governments, in cooperation with the international community, should reaffirm their commitment to promoting an enabling environment to achieve sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development and to eradicating poverty, with a special emphasis on gender, including the promotion of an open, equitable, secure, non-discriminatory and predictable trading system; stimulating direct investment; reducing the debt burden; and ensuring that structural adjustment programmes are responsive to social, economic and environmental concerns. Gender is a major area of emphasis in the ICPD Programme of Action; but the ICPD+5 document approved by the General Assembly in 1999 links gender issues explicitly to sustainable development. References to the debt burden and trade issues should be seen as reflecting the growing concern on these issues among the developing countries."

Political Commitment for HIV/AIDS



L. to R: Ms. Siri Tellier, Representative, UNFPA China - Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit, Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Public Health, Thailand -

Session two approached firstly how the spread of HIV/AIDS could be stopped and secondly, examined political commitment for HIV in the Asia-Pacific and CIS region. **Ms. Siri Tellier**, provided a lot of information in her presentation on halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, and **Mr. Tony Bates** and **Sen. Juan Flavier**, spoke extensively and astutely on political commitment for HIV. Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit moderated the session.

Ms. Siri Tellier, Representative UNFPA China, began by telling participants that the UN system gives special emphasis to HIV/AIDS as the disease is the single most important threat to social and economic development in many developing countries. The Security Council Resolution, which came about in January 2001, regarded support for the global fight against HIV/AIDS as among its 'core business,' and the epidemic was also acknowledged as a threat to Millennium Development Goals.

"UNFPA and parliamentarians have a crucial role to play if the spread of HIV/AIDS is to be stopped," said Ms. Tellier. "HIV/AIDS affects all sectors of society so we must not only concentrate on the health sector, but the educational, social affairs, agricultural, and business sectors also. Particular attention must be paid to young women as they are undoubtedly the most at risk from HIV/AIDS. Perhaps the most difficult hurdle to cross is the approach to sensitive issues that surround HIV. People need be aware of the consequences of contracting HIV, they need to know how to protect themselves from HIV, and there needs to be a change in attitude towards those living with the disease. We must remember that information is a weapon against HIV/AIDS and we must also ensure commodities are available to everyone. In conclusion, it is apparent that early, visible leadership, broad, sectorial involvement, and deep participation on the part of NGOs, mass organizations, and PLWHA can greatly assist in the global fight against HIV/AIDS."

Action Must be Taken Now

Mr. Tony Bates, APLF Advisor, UNAIDS SEAPICT, gave a detailed presentation on political commitment for HIV/AIDS. He was quick to point out that inactivity will only deepen the gravity of the regional HIV/AIDS problem.

"Inaction to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic has, and will continue to have, serious, and negative effects on society," stated Mr. Bates. "Failure to react to the crisis destabilizes society, damages productivity, undermines development gains, poses a threat to regional security, and increases the cost of intervention. While there have been many success

stories, we have no time to be complacent and the time to act is now." He urged parliamentarians to adopt affirmative policies and legislation, to incorporate HIV/AIDS into National Development Plans, and to encourage their governments to increase resource allocation for HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Bates then provided a brief introduction of the Asian Pacific Leaders Forum. He said "the aim of the APLF is to increase political leadership for effective national and regional action against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. APLF's main areas of work are training and learning activities, targeting the senior civil servant level, especially outside the Health Ministry. Supporting activities include: information exchange, collaboration for political advocacy, modelling and advocacy tools, socio-economic scenarios and analysis."

Alliances Must be Forged

Sen. Juan Flavier stressed the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration as a key ingredient in winning the fight against AIDS, and emphasized that collaboration between all stakeholders is needed to develop effective responses to HIV/AIDS, and that everyone should be willing and open to learn from best practice elsewhere.

"Asian parliamentarians play a very important role in checking the spread of AIDS from within and from outside our countries. As policy-makers, we decide how our particular countries should respond to the AIDS problem. If we find that the solution or part of it can come from within, we must reach out to all stakeholders across all sectors and forge alliances.

AIDS is a global epidemic and no one country is safe. We cannot afford to be complacent even if the figures we see within our own countries are lower compared to our neighbours. AIDS knows no borders. Therefore, when we craft laws, we must look beyond our borders to see how our own laws help in putting a stop to the spread of AIDS. We may even need to consider harmonizing our laws in order to have the greatest impact on putting a stop to the spread of AIDS.



Indian Delegation



Japanese Delegation



Korean Delegation



Chinese Delegation



Indonesian Delegation



Delegation of Lao/PDR



Mongolian Delegation



Delegation of Kazakhstan



Vietnamese Delegation



Delegation of Turkmenistan



Filipino Delegation



Malaysian Delegation



Delegation of the Maldives



Hon. Speaker of Tonga

Delegation of Solomon Islands



Gender Partnership - Addressing Gender Through Parliamentary Action



L. to R: Dr. Girja Vyas, MP India - Ms. Rosa Linda Miranda, Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM Bangkok - Mrs. Liu Bohong, Researcher and Director of the Women Research Institute of All China Women's Federation

Session three focused on gender partnership in Asia and addressing gender issues in Asia through parliamentary action. **Mrs. Liu Bohong**, spoke on gender partnerships. **Ms. Rosa Linda Miranada** and **Mrs. Kelly Hoare, MP** gave presentations on gender issues and parliamentary action. **Dr. Girja Vyas, MP India**, moderated the session.

Mrs. Bohong, Researcher and Director of the Women Research Institute of All China Women's Federation, said that gender equality and the role of women, thanks to strenuous efforts, have reached an historical high. However, there is much to be done to increase their role and provide more opportunities in education and employment.

"Concerning population and sustainable development, women have played an important role in family planning, developing economies, alleviating poverty, improving health care, and eradicating diseases. Family planning, however, must be put in a more extensive arena and include a role which can be played by men. For example, creating opportunities for men to participate in improving the position and role of women, and helping to relieve women of excessive pressures."

Turning to shortcoming and obstacles, Ms. Bohong stated that, "It is undeniable that various governments and NGOs have played an important role and have reaped notable results in gender equality, but these achievements are far from enough. The Asia-Pacific region, with its unique, historical and cultural background, is hampered by several constraints. These include traditional beliefs that women are inferior, therefore, gender inequality is still present in policies and legislation, and in practical life, discrimination, maltreatment, and sexual slavery still occurs."

Ms. Rosa Linda Miranda, Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM Bangkok, spoke on the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, a recognised bill for women, and urged parliamentarians to take more appropriate action in addressing the inequalities and discrimination against women.

"CEDAW is the internationally recognized bill of rights for women. It requires the elimination of discrimination in all aspects of women's lives – from education to employment, from family life to political office, from health care to rural development, from cultural stereotypes to public spending. CEDAW recognizes that the disadvantages, disparities and power imbalances faced by women throughout the world do not simply reflect a state of nature or a regrettable

misfortune. Rather, they are the effects of ongoing discrimination rooted in both the public and private realms, in attitudes, cultural norms, laws and government policies.

Parliamentarians need to call for regular monitoring of women's realisation of their human rights and take appropriate actions to address continuing inequalities and discrimination against women. They should advocate actively for women's human rights and gender equality in their respective countries. Parliamentarians should also serve as real role models in their commitment to the goal of a gender equal society, i.e. parliamentarians need to be gender-responsive in addition to having a rights perspective."

Mrs. Kelly Hoare, MP Australia, introduced participants to the status of women in Australian Parliament.



Mrs. Kelly Hoare, MP Australia

Concerning affirmative action policies, Ms. Hoare stated that Australia does not have laws setting aside a quota of seats for women or any other target group in the Australian Parliament and that the Australian Labour Party (ALP) is the only party to have an affirmative action policy for the pre-selection of candidates for election – 40% of candidates must be women. Since federation there have been only two female state premiers and three chief ministers. Australia has never had a female Prime Minister, however two states and two territories have had female Premiers/Chief Ministers.

Turning to the Australian Democrats' leadership, Ms. Hoare said that since its formation in 1978, there have been eight leaders of the Australian Democrats. Of these, five have been women.

The Australian Democrats do not have an affirmative action policy in the party's rules, however they have always had strong female participation and representation in all levels of the party. They were the first party in Australia to have a female as the Parliamentary leader. They are also the only party to have a female as the party president.

Good Governance, Parliamentarians' Perspective and Role



L. to R: Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, Philippines, PLCPD – Sen. Koroj Jokapeci Tagi, Fiji – Dr. Jagannath, MP India – Mr. Masatoshi Wakabayashi, MP Japan – Ms. Bae Sook Cho, MP Korea, Korean Parliamentary League on Children, Population, and Environment

Session four, a panel discussion, was dedicated to good governance of population and development programmes, and parliamentarians' perspectives and roles. Parliamentarians from India, the Philippines, Japan, Korea, and Fiji gave presentations on the topic.

Dr. Jagannath's presentation was very straight to the point and informative. He told participants that good governance is essential as it not only assists economic and social development, it also promotes the well-being and dignity of the people.

"Good governance," he said, "includes transparency and non-corruption, accountability for actions taken, responsiveness and community participation, and perhaps most important of all, ensuring the ruling of the law. In the area of population and development, it is vital that the programmes implemented meet the people's needs and aspirations, involves them in decision-making, and that women are seen as equal to men."

He further said the issue of improving governance in population and development programme must be addressed at multiple levels such as policy and planning, legislation, implementation, and monitoring. "Close monitoring of policies and programmes with potential freedom, and with the ability to participate in the life of one's community," stated Dr. Jagannath, "is just as important for human development as is being able to read and write, and be in good health."

Sen Rodolfo Biazon provided an overview of the population and development situation in the Philippines. He explained that parliamentarians who elect to be at the advocacy forefront of reproductive health and family planning issues are frequently up against great odds, mostly in terms of religious and cultural concerns.

"As parliamentarians, our role is cut out to enact policies addressing these interrelated issues along several fronts. One is to enact new laws or amend existing ones; second, is to provide oversight on the implementation of these laws; and, third, is to re-prioritize and re-allocate scarce government resources in such a way as we see best to impact positively on people's lives. Advocacy, which is still the more pronounced of the efforts to address population and development issues, is gaining more adherents as the masses acquire a growing awareness of the direct linkage between

poverty, poor health, and poor quality of life on the one hand, and the unchecked population growth on the other. This growing awareness is also causing the breakdown of the traditional barriers, mostly in the form of religious and even cultural influences. One specific difficulty that we still have to surmount is the differing definition of what constitutes induced abortion. The differing religious, medical, and legal definitions of abortion is at the heart of the problem of establishing a national policy on family planning."

Mr. Masatoshi Wakabayashi, MP Japan gave his understanding of the term 'good governance' and then related how Japan has greatly contributed to the issues of population and development through ODA.

"It is my understanding that good governance refers to impartial, fair and democratic governance," began Mr. Wakabayashi, "which means not only eliminating corruption from society but also enabling people to participate in decisions that affect their own lives by granting them rights or means, and also to bestow competence in the pursuit of responsible government.

I believe that Japan has made a significant contribution to population and development around the world through ODAs. To achieve good governance of ODAs, not only are the efforts of the Japanese government and JICA crucial, but also the collaboration of central and local governments receiving ODA assistance and residents at the grass-roots level."

Ms. Bae Sook Cho, MP Korea, made the point that if population and development issues are to be addressed appropriately, then the understanding of the general public and its involvement is crucial.

"The immediate challenge is to push governments to strengthen or work out the policies and strategies for stabilizing population numbers," she declared. "The promotion of gender equality, equity and empowerment of women must also be emphasized, as women's disadvantaged social



position helps perpetuate poor health, and a continued cycle of poverty. At the policy level, the greatest challenge has been in improving the legitimacy and necessity of gender equality as a fundamental value that should be reflected in all population and development choices and in institutional practices. I would like to emphasize that strong public support is essential in achieving all the tasks I have just mentioned."

In conclusion she said, "with this in mind, we, the parliamentarians should join in the efforts to promote the general public's understanding of and interest in population and development in our region. I hope these efforts will contribute to consolidating national consensus on accelerating our activities toward population and development."

Sen. Jokpeci Koroi, MP Fiji, said in her presentation that ideally, in the context of population, there should be better coordination between parliamentarians, national planning functionaries, and population policy and health officials. She also specified some of the constraints facing development planners, health officials and parliamentarians.

Sen. Koroi emphasized that in order to achieve some degree of good governance within the context of population and development programmes, issues such as integration of population factors into overall development strategies, reproductive rights, reproductive health and family planning, gender awareness, and population growth and structure all need to be given focus. "There needs to be an enhanced collaboration between development planners and parliamentarians," she said.

"Some of the constraints and challenges facing development planners, population and family planning officials and parliamentarians today are enormous," she continued, "but by no means impossible to achieve if we work together in partnership. Some of these constraints and challenges are structural problems, human resources problems, and symbolic problems i.e., a lack of awareness of the significance of people, population, and development in a country."



Delegation from Bangladesh



L. to R: Mr. Faqir Shah Mehran, MP Afghanistan - Mr. Mohammed Farooq Baraki, MP Afghanistan,



L. to R: Mrs. Kelly Hoare, MP Australia - Mrs. Dianne Proctor, CEO, Australian Reproductive Health Alliance



L. to R: Dr. Mostafa Khanzadi, MP Iran - Dr. Ramezan Vahidi, MP Iran - Mr. Seyed Hadi Borhani, Adviser, Iran



L. to R. Dasho Nima Wangdi, MP Bhutan - Mr. Namgay Phuntsho, MP Bhutan



L. to R: Dr. Pornpich Patankullert, MP Thailand - Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit, Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Public Health, newly-elected Secretary General of AFPPD - Dr. Chit Charoenprasert, Senator Thailand

7th General Assembly of AFPPD



L. to R: Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director, AFPPD - Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP Japan, Chairman AFPPD - Mrs. Napsiah Binti Omar, MP Malaysia, newly-elected Treasurer, AFPPD

Session V

Session five, (or the 7th General Assembly Session), provided participants the opportunity to take stock of work already accomplished, and to define what path the AFPPD should take in the coming three years. Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, Chairman of AFPPD, gave remarks, which were followed by Mrs. Napsiah Binti Omar's presentation of AFPPD's Activity Report 1999 - 2002, and Mr. Shiv Khare's presentation for the consideration of AFPPD accounts 1999 - 2002.

“We Must Focus on the National Level” Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP Japan

“We are gathered here to give a clear direction to the AFPPD for the next three years. We must try to focus on the inter-relation of population with development-related issues and find a strategy to convince fellow legislators and our governments that special emphasis must be given to population policies and their implementation. Water is becoming an increasingly scarce resource and an important factor in local and international conflicts. Similar to food security and sustainable development, we must counter the tendencies of some countries and agencies who tend to discuss development issues without giving due consideration to population growth. These views are short-sighted and we must provide all possible counter argument at the national level

Country Reports

Session seven was dedicated to the presentation of country reports focusing on parliamentarian activities on population and development related issues. Most countries attending the meeting presented their progress reports on parliamentarian activities. This was followed by a general discussion.

**“Only when the last tree has died
And the last river has been poisoned
And the last fish has been caught
Will we realise that we cannot eat money.”**

- Chief Seattle,
a nineteenth-century Cree Indian

Session VII

Session seven identified AFPPD's future activities to be undertaken in the coming years. A parliamentarian's pledge for a programme and resources, and the election of the AFPPD bearers, (please check back page for a complete list of newly-elected officers), ensued. This was then followed by a general discussion.

Closing Session

The meeting closed with the adoption of the Declaration, the vote of thanks given by Mme. Peng Peiyun, and finally, the presentation of mementos to participants.



Cambodian Delegation



20th Anniversary Celebration Hosted by Hon. Chairman Li Peng

The 20 Year's Celebration of AFPPD was a grand affair with a large number of Chinese parliamentarians, dignitaries, and founding members of AFPPD, UNFPA, and other organisations. **Hon. Chairman Li Peng**, with traditional Chinese fanfare, spoke very highly of China being the founder and a very active member of AFPPD. He also narrated the Asian Forum's achievements and explained as to why family planning and population programmes are essential for China. He then presented mementos of appreciation to former parliamentarians from China and around the world, as well as to UNFPA officials including **Mr. Jyoti Singh** and **Mr. Hirofumi Ando**, who helped to found AFPPD in 1981.

Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP Japan and AFPPD Chairman, presented Hon. Chairman Li Peng with a memento of appreciation for the support of the National People's Congress, (NPC), to AFPPD. Mr. Yatsu, in his address, praised China's leadership role in the development of AFPPD. He said that China, India, Japan as well as UNFPA have played a crucial role in making AFPPD an effective organization.



Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, Chairman AFPPD presenting a memento to Hon. Li Peng, Chairman of the National People's Congress China



Receiving mementos from Hon. Li Peng L. to R: Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn - Mr. Collin Hollis - Mr. Yoshio Yatsu - Mr. Shin Sakurai - Mr. Kunio Waki



Honoured guests at the 20 Years' Celebration L. to R: Dr. Ranjit Atapattu, Chairman of the Advisory Council to the Minister of Health, Sri Lanka - Mr. Hirofumi Ando, Professor and former Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA - Mr. Akio Matsumura, Executive Director, Global Forum of Spiritual Leaders and Parliamentarians

Pacific Parliamentarians Meet to Discuss Population

A two-day meeting of the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly on Population and Development, (PPAPD), took place on the 14th and 15th of October in Korolevu, Fiji. The meeting was jointly organized by the Parliament of Fiji, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and UNFPA. The meeting was attended by around forty-four members of parliament, senators, and parliamentary officials from fourteen Pacific countries including Australia and New Zealand. Ten of the participants were speakers or deputy speakers of legislative assemblies and parliaments.

A significant outcome of this meeting was an improved understanding of the function of parliamentary groups in Asia, including Australia and New Zealand. UNFPA also committed to support PPAPD activities during the 2003 - 2007 programme cycle.

AFPPD could not be present at this meeting due to its 7th General Assembly which took place on similar dates. Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, the Chairman of AFPPD, in a message to the Pacific Parliamentarians Assembly, assured all possible assistance in enabling Pacific parliamentarians to take effective actions.

The Speaker of Fiji Parliament, Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, was elected as Vice-Chair of AFPPD at the General Assembly in Beijing.

Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit New AFPPD Secretary General

A celebratory lunch was held in Bangkok at the end of October to felicitate Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit's election as AFPPD Secretary General. Dr. Sukavejworakit, Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Health, Thailand and previously one of AFPPD's Vice-Chairs, said in her speech that she was honoured to take on the role of AFPPD Secretary General and expressed her wish for AFPPD's continued good work in the population and development field. The lunch was attended by parliamentarians, population NGOs, UNFPA, and representatives from other UN agencies.



Dr. Chaiyos, UNFPA/CST presenting Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit with flowers



Enhancing the Role of Women Parliamentarians



Participants at the Invest in Women Invest in Change seminar

A two-day conference on women and women's rights was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on the 7th and 8th of October. The meeting, entitled 'Invest in Women Invest in Change,' was attended by fifty-one women parliamentarians from Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia and seventeen NGO representatives.

The conference was opened by Hon. Zainal Abidin Zin, Deputy Minister of Health Malaysia. During the opening, Mr. Wasim Jaman, Director of UNFPA/CST Kathmandu, delivered a statement on behalf of Dr. Thoraya Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director. Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director of AFPPD, gave a statement on the behalf of Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP Japan and AFPPD Chair.

The main objectives of the conference were to increase awareness and commitment at all levels of society, and to ensure that governments and international communities appreciate the significance and relevance of population related issues. Advocacy for specific, separate legislation to deal with all forms of violence against women was also encouraged.

Participants also had a meeting with Dr. Siti Hasmah, wife of the Hon. Prime Minister of Malaysia, at her residence.

Afghanistan Attending AFPPD Events

The Parliament of Afghanistan sent two of their members of parliament, overcoming all travel difficulties, to attend AFPPD's 7th General Assembly in Beijing. The UNFPA office in Afghanistan should be credited for their assistance in making all necessary arrangements.

Innovative Programmes Discussed at High Level Policy-Maker's Symposium

The High level policy-makers symposium on South-to-South collaboration: Strategic Options, which took place in Tokyo from 11 to 13 September was organized by NPO2050, and brought together representatives from international organisations, donor agencies, NGOs, and the Japanese Government. Presentations included innovative programmes within the Asian Pacific region including South-to-South collaboration between Cambodia and Thailand relating to 100% condom use amongst commercial sex workers, the Chinese comprehensive reproductive health service programme, the Bangladesh HPSP programme, as well as discussions on gender and development, with an emphasis on the role of NGOs in promoting women's empowerment at the regional level, HIV/AIDS and the policy implications for Africa and Asia/Pacific, and new global initiatives and resources for sustainable development. AFPPD sponsored parliamentarians from Australia, Cambodia, India, Iran, and the Philippines to attend the meeting. Mr. Shin Sakurai, MP Japan also addressed at meeting. The participants concluded the seminar with the adoption of a collective petition urging the Government of Japan to minimize any foreseeable reduction to their ODA budget due to adverse economic conditions. Mr. Kit Kitatani, President of Population 2050 organised the seminar in cooperation with the Bill Gates Foundation.



Legislation on Gender Violence Under Revision in Cambodia



Members of the National Assembly and the Senate of Cambodia attending the meeting

The Cambodian Association of Parliamentarians for Population and Development (CAPPD), in cooperation with the Ministry of Women and Veteran Affairs, organised a consultative meeting to review legislation on domestic violence and victim protection in late September. The meeting, which was supported by German Development Cooperation, (GTZ), and OXFAM, was attended by various parliamentarians, NGOs, and civil society representatives. "We will take the law to the people in the simple language of the people. We will translate the laws into their languages. We have committed ourselves to engender the judicial system to make every woman, every member of our families become peace builders." said Ms. Mu Sochua in her closing statement. It was hoped that the meeting would also be used as a lobby for increased support from men.



L. to R: Mr. Pen Pannha, MP, Secretary General, CAPPD, and Vice-Chairman of the Commission on Economy, Investment, Agriculture, Rural Development, and Environment, Cambodia – Mr. Seng Oeum, Senator, Chairman of the Commission on Public Health, Social Work, Labour, and Women's Affairs, Cambodia – Ms. Mu Sochua, Minister of Women's and Veteran's Affairs, Cambodia – Ms. Men Sam An, MP, Chairperson CAPPD, and Chairperson of the Commission on Public Health, Social Work, Labour, and Women's Affairs, Cambodia – Dr. Helmut Ohraun, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Germany – Princess Sisowath Santha, MP, Vice-Chairperson of CAPPD, and Member of the Commission on Public Health, Social Work, Labour, and Women's Affairs, Cambodia

Dr. Prasop Awarded for His Outstanding Personality and Great Achievements

The AFPPD wishes to congratulate Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn, former Secretary General of the Asian Forum for receiving



Dr. Ratanakorn, former Secretary General, AFPPD (right), shakes hands with Mr. Nong Duc Manh, Secretary General of the Central Party of Vietnam

the first Distinguished Service Award from the Asean Inter-Parliamentary Organisation, (AIPO). The award, presented in Hanoi, Vietnam, at the 23rd AIPO General Assembly, recognises Dr. Prasop's great achievements and contributions to the establishment of the AIPO Secretariat as well as his 'outstanding personality,' in the field of social development.

Cartoon

Corner



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Executive Director

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THAILAND

The AFPPD Newsletter

Editor:

Shiv Khare

Assistant Editor & Layout Design:

Mikaella Lock

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Copies can be obtained by contacting:

AFPPD, Phyathai Plaza, Suite 9-C,
Ratchathewi Road, Phyathai,
Bangkok, 10400, Thailand
Tel: (662) 219 2903 / 4

Fax: (662) 219 2905

E-mail: afppd@inet.co.th

On the Web: www.afppd.org

