



International Youth Day

August 12, 2016

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In celebration of International Youth Day, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) is pleased to share excerpts from an interview with Hon. Dastan Bekeshev, a member of the Parliament of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and a member of AFPPD’s Standing Committee on Investing in Youth. He has been actively involved with AFPPD since 2014. His most recent involvement was in the *South Asia Parliamentarians’ Meeting on the Elimination of Child Marriage* in March 2016 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Hon. Mr. Bekeshev discussed his hopes and aspirations for the youth in Kyrgyzstan and in Central Asia as well as the role of AFPPD in empowering youth in the region.

Hon. Dastan Bekeshev

Member of Parliament, Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic



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Hon. Dastan Bekeshev is a member of the Economic and Fiscal Policy Committee in the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic. He was first elected at the age of 26 in October 2010. As a young parliamentarian, Hon. Mr. Bekeshev demonstrates strong commitment to advancing youth policies. In 2013, he addressed the Ministry of Education and Science on the need to integrate practical knowledge, such as harmful effects of cigarettes and illegal drugs, emergency response, and traffic safety, into Kyrgyzstan’s educational curriculum. He also suggested that the government should not reduce the hours of studies in humanities and foreign languages.

Hon. Mr. Bekeshev was the Vice-Chairman of the Law Enforcement Committee from 2012 to 2013, and Chairman of the Human Rights Committee from 2010 to 2012. In 2001, he finished the School for Blind and Visually Impaired Children in Bishkek. Hon. Mr. Bekeshev has a degree in Law from the Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University.

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What motivated you to seek a position in the parliament?

First and foremost, I want to turn around the situation in our country for the better. Moreover, I want to bring rapid changes to our society. We, young citizens, are eager to see the positive changes when we wake up each and every morning. To our great regret, the reality is that entrenched bureaucracy tends to destroy our plans that can bring rapid changes. We need to devote ourselves to make every effort to break bureaucratic barriers. Second, I came to the parliament to make the best use of my energy and knowledge. I wanted to show people, especially the people aged 60 or older, that the young generation can deliver. They are not inferior workers and sometimes, they are even better workers.

Why did you choose youth empowerment as one of the priority areas of your work?

We witness rapid changes in economic situations and management methods, as well as how information technology is changing and shaping the world. Who can easily adapt to these changes? Who can bring these changes to our country? Of course, young people. That is why I frequently meet and engage young citizens, and school and university students in particular. I always remind them of the importance and necessity to pursue knowledge. Why? Because knowledge is the light of future. Because young people will also have to govern our country.

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What are your hopes and aspirations for the future of youth in Kyrgyzstan and in Central Asia?

If Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia invest in education projects for young people and create an enabling environment where conditions are met for youth to access and gain education, then the youth will have a great future. However, if Central Asian countries influence young people through prohibitions or create conditions that would force them to leave their countries, then a picture of our future is grim.

Based on your opinion, what measures should be implemented in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia for youth empowerment?

Investing in education and health is essential. Strengthening family values and creating employment are also critically important. There are some important lessons to be learned. Insufficient and low quality education will result in the country's degradation. Lack of job creation will result in out-migration of both literate and educated populations. Undermining family values will also result in the country's collapse.

What is the role of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in the work on youth empowerment in the Central Asian region?

As the goals of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development set, I think the Forum can engage members of parliaments to facilitate knowledge sharing and develop recommendations through discussions, which lead to better decision-making to improve the lives of young people in every country.