Background:

The 2017 Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) Central Asian Sub-Regional Conference will mark the first sub-regional meeting of AFPPD member parliamentarians from Central Asia since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. During the period of 2000-2015, Central Asian countries achieved significant progress in the implementation of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, the new set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by UN Members States including all Central Asian countries present a much broader and more ambitious agenda for governments and parliaments to work on in the coming years. Moreover, the recent social and political climate in the region has generated mixed results toward the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD PoA).

Against this backdrop, this Conference will provide a forum for Central Asian parliamentarians to take stock of achievements and emerging issues in the areas of the ICPD PoA so far, and to discuss the way forward by addressing new challenges in legislating and allocating budgets for the full implementation of the ICPD PoA in the SDG era. In so doing, participating parliamentarians will share and critically review the outputs of the AFPPD’s legislation analysis, which identifies legislation gaps between international norms and domestic laws in each AFPPD member country, as well as implementation challenges. AFPPD will bring in international experiences by inviting parliamentarians from Asia and Europe, and share good practices by rolling out the Russian version of the Briefing Cards for Parliamentarians (2016), one of the AFPPD’s flagship knowledge products.

Based on AFPPD’s on-going legislation analysis, nearly all Central Asian countries have developed robust legislation frameworks based on human rights principles. These encompass healthcare, education, gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE), including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and youth empowerment. While some Central Asian countries have pushed forward the passage and adoption of related legislation and policies, implementation challenges and obstacles still remain.

In the area of SRHR, the Government of Tajikistan, for instance, created for the first time a state budget line to partially cover the cost of contraceptives. The Government of Turkmenistan covered the cost of about 75% of its contraceptive supply in 2016. However, dwindling international development assistance and reduced donor support (due in part to most Central Asian countries’ elevated economic status to the middle-income group) challenges Central Asian parliamentarians to further intensify their strategic efforts to allocate budgets to key social sectors in implementing the ICPD PoA and achieving the SDGs.

There has also been growing conservatism in Central Asia and in the world, negatively affecting the implementation of the ICPD agenda in general, and the promotion of GEWE, especially SRHR and youth empowerment. Existing progressive national SRHR strategies in some Central Asian countries may not be automatically renewed upon the conclusion of those strategic cycles without the parliamentarians’ strong and concerted advocacy work. Adolescents’ sexual and reproductive health has often been neglected within a broader context of health and youth
policies, which requires the parliamentarians to sustain their strategic attention and action. Central Asia also faces emerging population issues including ageing, migration, and youth radicalization, demanding parliamentarians’ stronger advocacy and policy oversight as well as more concerted sub-regional collaboration than ever.

Thus, national governments in Central Asia have to take proactive steps and measures both nationally and sub-regionally to address a wide range of population and development issues previously often supported solely by their international partners. At the Conference, AFPPD's strategic priority issues and population groups, namely, women, youth, and older persons will receive dedicated sessions, and special emphasis will be placed on the needs of vulnerable populations, including poor rural women and youth, migrants, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Increased strategic investments particularly in the vulnerable population’s education and access to health throughout their life cycle will be critically important in order to close inequality gaps given the population trends and dynamics in Central Asia.

**Objectives:**

1. To increase the awareness of the need to ensure active ageing, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and investing in youth consistent with international legal instruments to which the governments in Central Asia have committed.
2. To provide a platform for parliamentarians to share good practices and country-context experiences to tackle challenges faced by vulnerable populations in Central Asia.
3. To increase the pool of parliamentarians with sufficient knowledge of addressing inequalities in health, ensuring that women and girls, youth and older persons have equal access to quality health care in the region.
4. To discuss how to effectively use parliamentarians' oversight and budgetary powers to address the challenges faced by vulnerable populations in Central Asia, and to monitor and facilitate effective implementation of related laws and policies.

**Expected Results:**

1. Participation by at least 30 parliamentarians who share their experiences, knowledge, and good practices in addressing the challenges faced by vulnerable populations in their respective countries and sub-regions in the context of SDG#3 (health) and #5 (gender).
2. Increased awareness of the issues and challenges faced by women and girls, old and young people in Central Asia, with a special focus on the vulnerable.
3. A clear way forward in ensuring active ageing, gender equality and women empowerment, and investing in the full and productive participation of youth in the context of Central Asia.

**Target audience and participants:**

60 participants comprising mainly parliamentarians from Central Asia, representatives from government institutions, civil society organizations, regional partners, and national and international experts.