



PRESS RELEASE

Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians and Ministers Adopted the New Statement of Commitment to Leave No Girls and No Women Behind



Panelists from the session on Women's Political Participation included Members of Parliament from India, Kazakhstan, Tonga, New Zealand and Nepal. (Photo: AFPPD)

BANGKOK, 8 November 2016 – More than 50 Speakers, Members of Parliament and Ministers from 25 Asia-Pacific countries attended the **“11th Women Ministers and Parliamentarians Conference”** last week in Bangkok, Thailand to tackle issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the region.

In the opening, Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi, Chairperson of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and Member of the House of Councillors in Japan, emphasized the role of parliamentarians and ministers in advancing gender equality. “Every time we hold a conference like this one today, we, parliamentarians and ministers, have raised the right issues, asked the right questions, and made commitments,” said Hon. Professor Takemi, “Now, the questions that need to be asked and answered are: Why haven’t we been able to

eliminate the gender gap by now? How can we work together to break barriers to achieve gender equality?”

“The investment in girls is an investment in families, communities and the whole society,” said H.E. Mr. Adérito Hugo da Costa, President of National Parliament of Timor-Leste, in his keynote speech. “When women and girls have healthy development, humankind and the State will also have healthy development.” Crucial insights into closing the gender gap were also provided by H.E. Professor Pornpetch Wichitcholchai, President of the National Legislative Assembly of Thailand, Hon. Ms. Gulmira Kudaiberdieva, Vice Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, and Hon. Dr. Jiko Luveni, Speaker of Parliament of Fiji.

Ms. Brooke Axtell, an anti-domestic violence and anti-human trafficking activist from the United States, shared her survival and healing story in the session on violence against women. She urged policymakers to include survivor leadership in policymaking and create greater funding for comprehensive mental healthcare. “The truth is that if young women and girls don’t receive the healthcare they need at an early age where violence first occurs, we cannot break that cycle and prevent it from occurring again when they reach womanhood,” said Ms. Axtell.

The Conference adopted the [*Statement of Commitment*](#), which encompasses providing women and girls equal access to health services, engaging men and boys in the fight to end gender-based violence, securing quotas for qualified women political candidates, offering young women training such as Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) skills and mentoring opportunities for their future political and economic leadership, protecting migrants as well as their children and the elderly being left behind by migrating family members, and employing gender-responsive budgeting. Fifty-four participating parliamentarians and ministers committed themselves to “work towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and call upon our current and future governments in particular to take up the commitment to leave no women and no girls behind.”

The 11th Women Ministers and Parliamentarians Conference was organized by AFPPD, hosted by the National Legislative Assembly of Thailand, and funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Japan Trust Fund, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).