



Newsletter

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The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

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Investing in Adolescent Girls will Protect their Rights and Break the Cycle of Poverty

*A message from AFPPD Vice-Chairperson,
Hon. Mme. Aitkul Samakova, MP
Kazakhstan*

On October 11th, International Day of the Girl Child, the world was called on to recognize the rights of girls and the specific challenges that they face around the world. The theme for this year was "The Power of the Adolescent Girl: Vision for 2030."

Girls have tremendous potential to contribute positively to society, but they cannot reach this potential if they are not more effectively supported during their adolescent years. For example, access to comprehensive sexuality education, reproductive health information, and reproductive health services leads to a decrease in adolescent pregnancies, abortions, and incidence of STIs, including HIV.

Globally more than 700 million women have been forced to marry in their adolescent years, which exposes them to reproductive health risks through early pregnancy. They are also at greater risk of sexual assault, and up to 50 per cent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under 16, which puts them greater at risk of HIV.

Kazakhstan has responded to these and other gaps in the rights of adolescent girls in the country by setting youth and gender as key priorities for national development. According to the Global Gender Gap Report (2014), Kazakhstan has made tremendous progress in terms of closing the gender gap to ensure that girls enjoy similar rights to boys. The country is now a leader in Rank 1 for healthy life expectancy, education attainment, and balanced sex ratio, where sex ratio may have been previously unbalanced by sex-selective abortion in favour of boys.

However, even as Kazakhstan reflects on these achievements, we still need to continue to work toward reducing the



Hon. Mme. Aitkul Samakova (MP, Kazakhstan) at IPCI 2014 held in Stockholm, Sweden.

high pregnancy rate among adolescent girls. There needs to be more effort to meet the increasing need for family planning among adolescent girls, particularly those with special needs or those from rural areas. Numbers of early and forced marriage, which often lead to early pregnancy, are actually rising and this needs to be addressed.

As a Vice-Chairperson of AFPPD, I urge my fellow parliamentarians to reaffirm their commitment to advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Urgent action is needed to combat any violations of their rights, to ensure their healthy development into mature women. This is a fundamental condition to achieving equitable and sustainable development outcomes. To quote United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: "The newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals rightly include key targets for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They offer an opportunity for a global commitment to breaking intergenerational transmission of poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination - and realizing our vision of a life of dignity for all."

Parliamentarians are in a unique position to make sure that our countries are investing in adolescent girls. I hope you will join me in supporting them to achieve their full potential as key actors in the global community.

Australian MPs Michael Keenan and Michaelia Cash on the Need for Strong, Informed Law-making to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery

July 30th was United Nations World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, which is an important opportunity to reflect on the ongoing work of the Australian Government and its non-government partners in combatting human trafficking, slavery, and slavery-like practices, including forced marriage.

Australian Minister for Justice, Michael Keenan, has said that human trafficking and slavery are “insidious crimes and grave violations of human rights that affect millions of people around the world, including in Australia.”

“Since 2003, the Australian Federal Police has received more than 588 referrals for human trafficking and slavery-related offences, and 273 trafficked people have received assistance under the Australian Government’s Support for Trafficked People Program.”

Australian Minister for Women, and Senator, Michaelia Cash, also notes that the strength of Australia’s response to human trafficking, slavery, and slavery-like practices was recognised in July in the United States annual Trafficking in Persons Report. Released in July 2015, the report puts Australia in Tier 1 for the 12th consecutive year: “fully compliant with US anti-trafficking standards.”



Hon. Michael Keenan, MP, Australia
Photo from: Skynews (Australia)



Hon. Sen. Michaelia Cash, MP, Australia
Photo from: The Dailytelegraph (Australia)

“While we have made significant progress, as long as human trafficking and slavery persist there is more work to be done and we are committed to continually refining Australia’s response to these exploitative practices,” Senator Cash said.

Over the past year, the Coalition Government has worked closely with members of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery to introduce reforms to the Human Trafficking Visa Framework, to safeguard the privacy of trafficked people and facilitate better-targeted government support to social security, education and support services. Australian MPs have also introduced legislation to further strengthen laws against forced marriage, and there have

been a number of workshops on forced marriage for frontline officers and service providers in every Australian capital city.

Australia has also launched its National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-2019, and a comprehensive forced marriage community pack has been developed, containing best-practice information for community organizations, service providers, and people in, or at risk of, a forced marriage.

More information on Australia’s response to human trafficking and slavery is available at www.ag.gov.au/humantrafficking.

India: Regional Parties Raised More Questions on Health and Population than the National Parties

On July 11th of this year, the Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD) celebrated World Population Day by releasing the comparative analysis, “Parliament Questions on Health and Population for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.”

The comparative analysis of these questions, which were raised by different political parties of the two houses of Parliament, revealed that regional parties such as the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Shiv Sena (SS), Samajwadi Party (SP), and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) were more active in asking questions on health and population as compared to the two major national parties, the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

August

Bangladesh: Local-level Consultation on Reducing Maternal Mortality and Morbidity by Eliminating Child Marriage

In August 2015, the Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat held a Consultation Meeting in Pirganj, Rangpur District, with stakeholders, entitled “Reducing Maternal Mortality and Morbidity by Eliminating Child Marriage.” The meeting comes under the UNFPA Bangladesh project, “Strengthening Parliament’s Capacity in Integrating Population Issues into Development (SPCPD).” The specific objective of the meeting was to raise awareness in the community and among community leaders about the plight of female children who are married off at a very early age, especially in the rural parts of Bangladesh, leading to a high rate of maternal mortality.

The chief guest at the meeting was Dr.

Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury, MP, Hon. Speaker, Bangladesh Parliament, and the Chair was Mr. Md. Ashraf Moqbul, Senior Secretary, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat and Chairman of the SPCPD. The meeting was inaugurated by Mr. A. Y. M. Golem Kibria, Additional Secretary, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat and Project Director, SPCPD, and attended by MPs, Mr. Abul Kalam Azad MP, Gaibandha-4 and Mr. Abul Kalam Mohammad Ahsanul Haque MP, Rangpur-2.

Representatives from the Police Department, the Bangladesh Awami League, and United Nations organizations also participated in the meeting, and there were representatives from Pirganj,



Hon. Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker, Bangladesh Parliament, addressing the media and the public on eliminating child marriage as key to reducing maternal mortality and morbidity.

Rangpur District. Participants from Pirganj exceeded 500 people, including female high school students, teachers, birth registrars, marriage registrars, imams of mosques, and mothers of the 15 Unions of Pirganj.

Also in attendance were many high-school students, including girls, as

well as teachers, birth registrars, and marriage registrars, some of whom were speakers. High-level government officials of the Parliament Secretariat and selected ministries, civil society members, NGOs, journalists from print and electronic media, and other stakeholders attended as well.

AFPPD conducts training on Prioritizing ICPD in the SDGs

In late August, AFPPD conducted a two-day training in Bangkok, on advocacy for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff. The topic was “Prioritizing ICPD in the Sustainable Development Goals.” Participants included 13 parliamentarians and 7 National Committee secretariat staff from the Asia-Pacific region, 3 experts from the UN and from the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), and selected AFPPD staff (see list of participants).

Two new AFPPD publications were used in designing this training, “Parliamentarian Resource Kit on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights with Population and Development Links in Asia and the Pacific Post 2015” and “Policy Advocacy Manual: Advancing Population and Development Issues Beyond 2015.”

Speaking on ICPD and the SDGs, Interim Executive Director Nobuko Horibe said: “The Post-2015 development agenda was finalized and endorsed by Member States of the United Nations in September 2015. The SDGs will influence policy priorities and resourcing for population and development issues for years to come.”



Former Interim Executive Director Ms. Nobuko Horibe sharing her insights on Sustainable Development Goals.

Parliamentarians have a critical role in ensuring that the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (ICPD PoA) remains a priority in the SDGs, and that governments will continue to honour and implement their ICPD commitments.

AFPPD the Expert Partner in APEC Health Working Group

On August 24 and 25 this year, former AFPPD Special Advisor for Governance and Management, and current Executive Director, Dr. Mika Marumoto, attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Health Working Group Meeting (the “Experts Group”) in Manila, the Philippines. This public-private partnership initiative is co-chaired by the Philippines Ministry of Health and Merck-Serono.

At the two-day intensive gathering, over 70 experts and government representatives finalized the policy toolkit, “Healthy Women, Healthy Economies,” to enhance women’s economic participation throughout the region by improving women’s workplace health and safety, health access and awareness, actions to combat gender-based violence (including sexual harassment), sexual and reproductive health, and work-life balance. The toolkit was then launched in September and is expected to be adopted by the APEC senior officials meeting in November. AFPPD is now recognized as part of the Experts Group, having contributed significantly to the APEC Health Working group.



Ms. Lucy Jones (Workshop Facilitator)



Participants from Nepal and Bhutan sharing notes on advocacy.



Timor-Leste participants sharing their experience on policy advocacy.



UNAIDS Mr. Mohammed Ali Bhuiyan discussing the need for collaborative effort in achieving the SDGs.



Hon. Ms. Upadhaya Mahalaxmi Dina (MP, Nepal) shares how the ICPD Agenda is being addressed in her country.



Hon. Mr. Zangley Dukpa (MP, Bhutan) sharing his thoughts on policy-making in his country.



Hon. Mr. Ouk Damry (CAPPD Secretary-General) explains the situation in Cambodia.



Ms. Maida Ojeda (Local Advocacy Officer, PLCPD) talks about the need for national committees to educate newly elected parliamentarians.



Consultant Ms. Lucy Jones facilitating a discussion during the group work.

List of Participants in "Prioritizing ICPD in the SDGs"

Bangladesh

Hon. Whip Mrs. Mahabub Ara Begum Gini, MP
 Hon. Mr. Fakhru Imam, MP
 Hon. Dr. Md. Enamur Rahman, MP
 Mr. Md. Ashrafu Moqbul, Senior Secretary, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat
 Mr. Khondker Zakiur Rahman, Technical Officer, UNFPA and Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat

Bhutan

Hon. Mr. Zangley Dukpa, MP
 Hon. Mr. Dorji Wangdi, MP

Cambodia

Hon. Mrs. Lork Kheng, MP
 Hon. Mr. Ouk Damry, CAPPD Secretary General

Lao PDR

Hon. Mr. Somphou Douangsavanh, MP
 Mr. Bounlert Louanedouangchanh, Director, LAPPD

Nepal

Hon. Ms. Upadhaya Mahalaxmi Dina, MP
 Hon. Mr. Bishma Adhikari, MP
 Hon. Mr. Dhani Ram Poudhel, MP

Philippines

Ms. Maida Ojeda, Local Advocacy Officer, PLCPD

Thailand

Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, MP and AFPPD Secretary-General

Timor-Leste

Hon. Ms. Maria Rosa da Camara, MP
 Hon. Ms. Bendita Moniz Magno, MP

Mr. Ratnofianos Sani Antonio Usfinit, Technique Administrative/CEGEN Staff
 Ms. Jesuina C. Pereira dos Reis, Analyst Sectoral/CEGEN Staff

UNFPA APRO

Mr. Christophe LeFranc, Technical Adviser on Population and Development

UNAIDS

Mr. Mohammed Ali Bhuiyan, Global Outreach and Advocacy Adviser

IPPF East and South East Asia - Oceania Region (ESEAOR)

Ms. Fumie Saito, Asia NGO Regional Coordinator for Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (PMNCH)

Facilitator

Ms. Lucy Jones

September

IAPPD Engages with Parliamentarians for a TB-free India

Tuberculosis (TB) affects an estimated 40 per cent of the Indian population and accounts for approximately one-fifth of the global incidence. Main reasons for these high numbers include the poor knowledge and services about available national programmes as well as the difficulty in accessing health services. In response, the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases South-East Asia Office (UNION) has requested the IAPPD to work with them on engaging parliamentarians for Tuberculosis in India. The main objective of engaging parliamentarians is to sensitize them to

the issue of TB in the country and to seek their support in raising the profile of efforts against TB and generating commitment to address challenges.

Two meetings were held in September, with the UNION Team consisting of Ms. Kavita Ayyagiri and Shiva Shrestha, at IAPPD. The main component of the project is the call to action for a TB-free India under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. In the meetings IAPPD agreed in principle to support the UNION in reaching out to parliamentarians, and IAPPD and UNION will work together to

sensitize and mobilize MPs on this vital issue.

For more information about IAPPD events, please visit their homepage, <http://www.iappd.org>

IAPPD Secretariat:
 Mr. Manmohan Sharma, Executive Secretary, IAPPD.
 Siri Institutional Area, Khel Gaon Road 110049 New Delhi, India
 Email: iappd@airtelmail.in

AFPPD 11th General Assembly



Opening Session: Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi (MP, Japan and AFPPD Chairperson)

The main theme of AFPPD's 11th General Assembly, held in Bangkok in October, was "Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians: Advancing ICPD, Achieving the SDGs." The Assembly was attended by over 100 participants, including parliamentarians and members of national committees from 25 countries in five sub-regions, Central Asia, West and South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific. AFPPD's partner organizations, UNFPA, UN Women, UNAIDS, the IPPF, HelpAge, and European Parliamentary Forum (EPF), were also present during the Assembly.

The General Assembly reflected AFPPD's commitment to the ICPD PoA, adopted in Cairo in 1994, and the objective of this year's "GA" was to unify the forum as a regional network of parliamentarians and parliamentary committees in fulfilling policies to meet the new SDGs with a particular focus on the unfinished agendas of the ICPD.

"The 11th AFPPD General Assembly was conducted at such a critical juncture during the transition period from the



Delegates from Central Asia, Philippines, and New Zealand attentively listening to the speech of Hon. Professor Takemi.

MDGs to the post-2015 "SDGs" era," said Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi, the AFPPD Chairperson.

The General Assembly commenced with

an opening speech by HE Professor Pornpetch Wichicholchai, President of Thailand's National Legislative Assembly, welcoming Asia-Pacific parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and population and



Press Briefing: Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi, H.E. Professor Pornpetch Wichicholchai (President of National Legislative Assembly, Thailand), and Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont (MP, Thailand, and AFPPD Secretary-General)



Welcome Speech: H.E. Ambassador Shiro Sadoshima, (Japanese Embassy)

development experts. UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office (APRO) Director Ms. Yoriko Yasukawa and AFPPD Chairperson Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi were among the speakers during the opening session.

The plenary session was followed by three thematic sessions, a partner session, and AFPPD sessions. The first thematic session, on investing in young people, focused on a means of realizing demographic dividends and promoting youth participation as an engine of growth and sustainability. It started with a presentation by UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Adviser Ms. Justine Sass, with Regional Director of UNAIDS' Asia and the Pacific Technical Support Team, Steven Krauss, moderating. The presentation was: "Young People as an



Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Session: Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone (MP, Australia), Hon. Ms. Golalai Nur Safi (MP, Afghanistan), Hon. Mrs. Gundu Sudhari (MP, India), Hon. Mme. Aitkul Samakova (MP, Kazakhstan), Ms. Veronica Pedrosa (Al Jazeera), Ms. Sivananthi Thanemthiran (Executive Director, ARROW), Ms. Roberta Clark (Regional Director, UN WOMEN).

Engine of Growth and Sustainability in Asia and the Pacific: Maximizing the Demographic Dividends in National Planning for SDGs." The session effectively engaged the audience and panellists, which included young parliamentarians, Hon. Mr. Shantaram

Naik, MP from India, and Hon. Mr. Danyar Terbishaliev, MP from Kyrgyzstan.

The second thematic session, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment," was moderated by Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone, MP, Australia, who opened the

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11th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
October 10-11, 2015 | Bangkok, Thailand
**ASIA-PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARIANS
ADVANCING ICPD
ACHIEVING SDGs**



**From
the People of Japan**





Healthy Ageing: Hon. Wang Longde (MP, China) showing fellow parliamentarians how he keeps himself fit and healthy.

session by asking, “Why is SDG 5 (Gender Equality) the only goal with no mention of any specific target year?” The session then explored what parliamentarians can do to reduce gender gaps and advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The third thematic session, on Active Ageing, focused on how to enable healthy, productive, and dignified lives for older persons and how to realize the second demographic dividend for economic and social development. This session was moderated by Ms. Veronica Pedrosa, a former journalist from CNN, BBC, and Aljazeera. Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi and Hon. Wang Longde also presented two county cases of ageing in society, Japan and China.

“The AFPPD region-wide population dependency ratio hit the bottom in 2015, implying that the region’s population structure is ageing rapidly from now on,” Prof. Takemi’s noted based on empirical evidence. This was a wake-up call for many AFPPD member parliamentarians, who tended not to consider ageing as their priority issue.

Next was a Partner Session roundtable among Mr. Neil Datta from the EPF, Ms. Roberta Clark from UN Women, Ms. Lubna Baqi from UNFPA, Steven Kraus from UNAIDS, Mr. Svend Robinson from the Global Fund, Ms. Fumie Saito from IPPF ESEAOR, and Ms. Sivananthi Thanemthiran from the Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW). Moderated by AFPPD former Interim Executive Director Ms. Nobuko Horibe, this session called for cooperative and collective commitment to achievement of the SDGs.

AFPPD Secretary-General Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont then presented the AFPPD Report on Delivery and Outcome of the Strategic Plan 2013-2015 and the Financial Statement for 2013-2015. Audited financial statements were approved by the plenary at this session and former Interim Executive Director, Ms. Nobuko Horibe, presented the Proposed AFPPD Strategic Plan for 2016-2019.

Dr. Mika Marumoto presented AFPPD’s communication strategy and guidelines, introducing the Organization’s newly launched website and knowledge management platform, which is intended to transfer ICPD and SDG knowledge to parliamentarians and at the same time increase their visibility among parliamentarians and key stakeholders.

Amendments to the APPFD Constitution and rationale were then approved, and the Chair, Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi, introduced new AFPPD Office Bearers. He proposed three new standing committees as well, on Investing in Youth, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, and Active Ageing. Professor Takemi then concluded the session by announcing that the G7 World Parliamentary Conference would be held in late April in Tokyo, to convey parliamentarians’ statement to the G7 Summit in Japan.

Meet AFPPD Executive Director, Dr. Mika Marumoto

At this year’s GA, the AFPPD Executive Committee appointed Dr. Mika Marumoto Executive Director effective November 1st, after an extensive competitive selection process. AFPPD Chair Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi cited Dr. Marumoto’s passion for AFPPD’s work as

well as her demonstrated leadership skills as main reasons for the selection. Dr. Marumoto was previously Special Advisor for the Task Force on



AFPPD Session: Dr. Mika Marumoto, the newly appointed Executive Director, of AFPPD presents updates on AFPPD’s website and the new knowledge platform.

Transparency, Accountability, and Governance, playing a key role in introducing a new governance structure and mechanism to AFPPD, improving transparency and accountability.

New AFPPD Member Profile: Bhutan

AFPPD officially welcomes Bhutan as its latest member. Hon. Mr. Jigme Zangpo, Speaker of the Bhutan Parliament, was present to show support for the newly formed National Committee on Population and Development. In his speech, he expressed that over recent years, AFPPD has provided an alternative platform for Bhutanese parliamentarians to learn about Population & Development, and said that AFPPD is now a key partner in Bhutan’s progress toward the SDGs. Hon. Karma Tenzin has also been appointed Chair of Bhutan’s new National Committee on Population & Development.



Speaker of the Parliament of Bhutan, Hon. Mr. Jigme Zangpo and AFPPD Chair Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi during the warm welcome of Bhutan as the newest member of AFPPD.



AFFPD Secretary-General Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont warmly welcomes Hon. Mr. Jigme Zangpo to AFPPD



Opening Session: Ms. Yoriko Yasukawa (Director UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office)



Partners Session: Mr. Svend Robinson (Global Fund), Mr. Neil Datta (EPF), Ms. Lubna Baqi (UNFPA), Mr. Steve Kraus (UNAIDS), Ms. Fumie Saito (PMNCH, IPPF EASEOR), Ms. Sivananthi Thanemthiran (ARROW), Ms. Roberta Clark (UN Women).



Investing in Young People Session: Ms. Neha Chauhan (IPPF SARO), Mr. Jeffrey Acaba (Youth Lead), Hon. Danyar Terbishaliev (MP, Kyrgyzstan)



Plenary Session/Country Report: Hon. Mr. Teodoro Brawner Baguilat (MP, Philippines and new AFPPD Vice-Chairperson)



Plenary Session: Hon. Dr. Sharmen Stone, Hon. Claire Moore (MP, Australia), and Hon. Ms. Golalai Nur Safi (MP, Afghanistan)



Investing in Young People Session: Hon. Mr. V.P. Singh Badnore (MP, India) asking a question to panelists.



AFPPD 11th General Assembly Concluding Remarks by Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi, Chairperson

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your active participation in the 11th AFPPD General Assembly.

Let me briefly summarize our accomplishments over the past two days, major discussion points, suggestions, and commitments we've made as a regional network of Asia-Pacific parliamentarians.

The General Assembly is a perfect opportunity for Asia-Pacific parliamentarians to reflect on our accomplishments in achievement of the MDGs and ICPD PoA, and to commit ourselves as a region to working toward the SDGs. We are moving toward truly seeking to leave no one behind and toward creating a more egalitarian society. We parliamentarians should also hold ourselves accountable for tracking the successful achievement of the SDGs, in particular goals related to youth, gender equality, and active ageing.

This General Assembly acknowledged the crucial efforts made by parliamentarians in advancing ICPD through legislation and this has been possible because parliamentarians have the privilege of working directly with the people.

Throughout this meeting, all countries have highlighted women's rights as their priority and over the past three years, five countries have adopted policy frameworks on the prevention of domestic violence and child marriage. Other important issues raised by parliamentarians were poverty reduction, primary education, and climate change. Almost all countries also reported significant decreases in maternal mortality. Yet more work still needs to be done.

We've also learned that young people in our region are, on average, healthier, better educated, better connected and politically more engaged than any previous

generations. However, we also face several challenges in terms of provision of quality education, unemployment rates among young people, and the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health information, commodities and services, which contribute to a high incidence of unplanned pregnancy and the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

We've had many dynamic panel discussions with parliamentarians and representatives from civil society on key issues related to young people, on topics such as the importance of comprehensive sexuality education, which enables young people to make informed decisions about their sexuality and health.

We've discussed meaningful political participation by young people as well, and what it means to engage them effectively. We need to include young people in the decision-making process, particularly on the issues that directly affect them. Or simply put, "nothing for us without us."

We've recognized too that gender inequality remains a global and fundamental challenge for all, and we've reached consensus that gender equality is not just a "women's concern," but it requires active contributions from men too. Yet deeply entrenched social norms, traditions, and religious beliefs still prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential.

Political will to get funding allocated for the implementation of these laws and policies is essential to achieving our gender goals. The media plays a critical role in shaping public opinion and awareness about the treatment of women in society, and forging partnerships with key stakeholders is a vital strategy in sharing national-level experiences and learning mutually among countries.

With the unprecedented rate of population ageing in the Asia-Pacific region, we are also reminded of the urgent need to conceptualize "life course" approaches to achieving healthy ageing. There is unanimous agreement that investing in youth and encouraging them to lead healthy lifestyles is crucial to achieving the goal of healthy ageing. Policies that tackle ageing should take a long term,

multi-sectoral and multi-perspective approach. Ageing of populations affects all countries, and early preparation can ensure that we maximize opportunities within an ageing society.

To this end, AFPPD's partners have emphasized the need for better coordination and division of labour to maximize resources. Such partnerships include multi-stakeholder, south-south, private, and public sector partnerships for resource mobilization, sharing of knowledge, and sharing of technical expertise. AFPPD needs to prioritize and map out those potential partnerships in order that members and partners can complement each other's strengths and enhance mutual accountability to achieve the SDGs.

On the implementation and outcomes of the AFPPD strategic plan for 2013-2015, over the past three years, AFPPD has expanded its network of national committees, contributing to strengthening their capacities of the national committees and engaging parliamentarians in our region. Financials for 2012-2014 have been reviewed and approved, and AFPPD's new website and knowledge management platform have been launched.

Finally, in preparation for the realization of the SDGs, the General Assembly has approved the new AFPPD strategy and amendments to the Constitution, the new office bearers, the new Executive Director, and the three Standing Committees as follows: the Standing Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, the Standing Committee on Investing in Youth, and the Standing Committee on Active Ageing.

In conclusion, the 11th AFPPD General Assembly has adopted a forward looking and ambitious strategic plan. We have undertaken internal reforms as well, strengthening our constitution and organizational policies to make our operations more transparent, more accountable, and more efficient. I am counting on you to take action nationally and regionally to advance our vision further. Parliamentarians can become the agents of change that the world wants to see for the next 15 years.



From
the People of Japan

AFPPD would like to thank Ms. Alexandra Lamb (Australian PGPD), Mr. Khondker Zakiur Rahman (UNFPA Bangladesh), and Mr. Manmohan Sharma (IAPPD) for their contribution to this newsletter.

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