



The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population

NEWS LETTER

No.58 June 2017

The IPPF Director-General's Visit to Japan: The Importance of Japan's Support for Achieving the SDGs following the Trump Administration's Re-application of the Mexico City Policy

For many years since it was founded the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) has enjoyed a good relationship of cooperation with Japan. Its Director-General, Mr. Tewodros Melesse, recently visited Japan for four days from 5 June, together with IPPF Africa Regional Director Mr. Lucien Kouakou, and its Director of Performance Division, Ms. Snjezana Bokulić. They were accompanied by Ms. Yuri Taniguchi, IPPF's Chief Resource Mobilization Officer. As well as visiting Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these guests from the IPPF met with representatives from relevant NGOs such as JOICFP (the IPPF's affiliates in Japan) and the Japan Family Planning Association (JFPA), to exchange views and ideas. On 7 June they also attended a meeting of the JPFP Joint Committee, on the difficulties presented by the complete halt in U.S. assistance for reproductive health-related activities including family planning, as a result of the Trump Administration's re-application of the Mexico City Policy. This meeting discussed building awareness of the issue and courses of action to take in response.



Just before this Committee meeting got underway, Dr. Kiyoko Ikegami, Acting Director of the UNFPA Tokyo Office, raised the issue of the sudden passing away of UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, reporting also that UNFPA Deputy Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem from Panama had been appointed immediately as Acting Executive Director. At Mr. Melesse's motion, a minute's silence was observed for Mr. Osotimehin, as a mark of respect for his work with UNFPA and partnership with IPPF, as well as the friendship he showed.



Address by Mr. Melesse

In his address Mr. Melesse expressed thanks to Japan for its long-standing assistance for IPPF. Referring to the achievements of Hon. Shidzue Kato, one of the founders of IPPF, he noted that the philosophy which guided the IPPF in its work had its roots in Japan's experience in the fields of family planning and maternal and child health. He then again expressed his thanks to the Japanese government and the Japanese people.

Mr. Melesse observed that Japan's ODA support for IPPF began in 1969, and emphasized the extremely important role that such support had played in the time since. He explained that IPPF has expanded its sexual reproductive health (SRH) programs into 170 countries today, and that the services it provides have increased exponentially in the years of between 2012 and 2016. Mr. Melesse also said that so long as universal health coverage (UHC) including SRH remains unachieved (and its achievement is a goal that the IPPF strongly promotes), it will not be possible to build "societies where women shine", a goal currently promoted by the Japanese government. On behalf of the IPPF he called on Japan's contribution in this area to shine around the world, through close partnerships between IPPF and Japan's government and private sectors.

In contrast, Mr. Melesse said that the re-introduction of the Mexico City Policy, known as the Global Gag Rule, by executive order of President Trump had brought assistance from the U.S. in the areas of population and family planning to a complete halt, and as a result IPPF's financial position faced unprecedented difficulties. Although the Policy had been introduced at other times in the past, this time it was being applied more broadly and comprehensively than on those occasions. Mr. Melesse estimated that therefore the fiscal effects of the Policy would be 16-18 times greater this time, with the result that the IPPF is looking at a reduction in its funding over the next three years of US\$100 million in total. However, in order to realize the goals that were also pursued by Hon. Shidzue Kato, namely to offer protection to women facing difficult lives and to build societies where women shine, he expressed the strong intention that IPPF would continue its work in containing runaway population growth; helping protect the Earth's environment; and building societies that eliminate all forms of violence. He ended his address by asking Japan for its continued active support in achieving respect for the human rights of each and every individual and in eliminating a potential source of future problems for humanity.

Q&A session



Following Mr. Melesse's address, Mr. Ichiro Aisawa, acting Chair of JPPF, noted that "One in 120 people in the world is forced to live as a refugee or as an internally displaced person. This represents the greatest crisis in population movements that the world has faced since the Second World War. It therefore goes without saying that the issue of population is an underlying factor for this crisis, and I want people to deeply examine the extent and seriousness of this Policy to come up with solutions".

In the Q&A session that followed, Hon. Takeaki Matsumoto asked what kind of organizations will be impacted by the Policy. He then said that "Japan is holding the World Assembly for Women (WAW!) in order to realize societies where women shine, and it has publicly pledged US\$3 billion in support. Given that RH is the cornerstone for realizing societies where women shine, I want to express my expectations for the Japanese government to act in this area. Cooperation at an international level will be essential for whatever action will be needed to deal with these issues, so I would like to see the U.S. rejoin the circle of international cooperation".



Mr. Melesse added: "This Policy is discriminatory, in that it will not be applied to institutions that engage in international activities within the U.S. International RH and family planning institutions like UNFPA and IPPF are going to be hardest hit by it. In addition, there will be cuts to America's ODA from now through to 2030, and these are going to have an impact around the world on the whole".



Hon. Teruhiko Mashiko, Vice-Chair of JPPF, asked “IPPF says it has been affected by the Policy for 17 out of 32 years. How did it deal with the Policy in those 17 years, and what sort of assistance does it want from Japan?” In response, Mr. Melesse said, “We managed on those occasions because Europe and Japan stepped in with help. But this time while we are going to encourage the U.S. to increase its aid for development programs that do not involve family planning, for our family planning programs we hope to look to Japan for help”.

Lastly there was a question from the Hon. Yoshitaka Sakurada: “Whereas Japan is currently struggling with its low birth rates, the world’s population continues to increase. When will it peak, and what measures are being taken concerning food production in that regard?” APDA Executive Director Dr. Osamu Kusumoto replied that “Around 1998 the United Nations estimates forecast that ‘the world’s population will peak at 9.7 billion around the year 2100, and after that will start to decline’. Since 2000 this forecast and the relevant data have been amended and revised several times, and according to today’s estimates global population is projected to exceed 11.2 billion in 2100, and the UN is no longer sure what the population peak will be. On the issue of food production, the mainstream view – which is also the view of the UN – is optimistic: namely, that provided that the food that the world can produce can be allocated to where it is needed, the challenge of feeding the world’s peak population can be met by tackling the huge amount of food lost and wasted at every stage from production to the consumer. It is also a fact, however, that the world’s capacity to produce food is also under threat due to environmental issues, and there are some people who point out how over-stretched that capacity already is. So opinion on that point is divided”. Dr. Kusumoto added that these very issues were discussed at the Population and Food Security Fora that APDA organized in Tokyo in October last year and April this year.



Lastly Hon. Aisawa said, “In my roles as President of the Parliamentary League for the UNHCR and Chair of the Japan-Africa Union Parliamentary Friendship League, I have a strong interest in issues affecting Africa. I was already well aware that its population of one billion today was on track to reach two billion. But then I was taken aback when I saw data containing population estimates saying that it could reach at least 3 billion and – if left unaddressed– 4 billion. If all these people could be given appropriate education, nutrition and health, I believe they would prove to be an engine for future growth and development. But given Africa’s situation today, that will not be easy. Family planning and RH will again be vital in dealing with these issues. For that reason also, this meeting should be a forum for thinking about ways to get past this Policy”. With that comment Hon. Aisawa closed the meeting.

