



The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population

NEWS LETTER

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JPPF Joint Committee Meeting Welcomes IPPF Director-General Designate “Japan and IPPF: Aspirations and Expectations”

Dr. Alvaro Bermejo, Director-General Designate of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), visited Japan together with IPPF Africa Regional Director Mr. Lucien Kouakou, accompanied by Ms. Yuri Taniguchi, IPPF Chief Resource Mobilization Officer, to attend the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Forum 2017. IPPF was co-founded by Hon. Shidzue Kato, former member of Japan’s House of Councillors, and it has been closely working with Japan ever since.



Photograph of the high level opening session (Photo: Cabinet Public Relations Office)
http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/ic/ghp/page11_000064.html

With its strong political will to commit to UHC in the arena of international development, the Government of Japan (Ministries of Foreign Affairs; Finance; and Health, Labour and Welfare) co-organized the UHC Forum 2017 with the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UHC2030 and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). At the Forum’s high-level opening session, Dr. Bermejo assembled with H.E. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, and other distinguished guests from

around the world. The Forum got off to a propitious start for the future Director-General of IPPF, who was able to engage in a special courtesy talk with Prime Minister Abe. Dr. Bermejo discussed more substantive matters with Hon. Kazuyuki Nakane, Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, where they re-affirmed that Japan and IPPF would deepen their relationship further.



Hon. Ichiro Aisawa, JPPF Acting Chair

JPPF took this opportunity to hold a joint committee meeting with the IPPF guests present.

In March 2018, Dr. Bermejo will be succeeding Mr. Tewodros Melesse, the previous Director-General who headed IPPF for six years. Dr. Bermejo, who hails from Spain, qualified as a medical doctor from Complutense University of Madrid and holds a master’s degree in public health at the University of Leeds in the U.K. He is an expert in the field of medicine and public health, and has gained a wealth of experience as a result of many projects he has successfully conducted at various international organizations, including the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Efforts to stabilize the world’s population will be crucial if we are to realize the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). To this end, it is essential that everyone can have access to reproductive health (RH) services, which include family planning. IPPF is an organization of affiliated family planning associations that provide RH services in more than 150 nations. It implements practical measures for dealing with population issues, focused on working with individuals at a grassroots level.

JPPF Acting Chair Hon. Ichiro Aisawa opened the Joint Meeting with welcoming remarks, mentioning that the UHC Forum represented a major pillar of Japan's international contribution and that when it comes to tackling the SDGs through the efforts of the United Nations, international agencies, and all of Japan including its civil societies and corporations, he would like to see a further deepening of the common understanding between international agencies such as IPPF. Dr. Bermejo then gave his address as to his aspirations as a new head of the organization and what he expects from Japan. Lastly Mr. Kouakou expressed some words of thanks to JPPF, following which there was a lively exchange of views and ideas. (A summary appears as follows).



Hon. Teruhiko Mashiko, JPPF Vice-Chair

Address by Dr. Bermejo



Dr. Alvaro Bermejo, IPPF
Director-General Designate

Prior to this visit I have been to Japan three times. The first time was 17 years ago, when I appeared on a panel on an NHK television programme with regard to "Health for All", in my capacity as Health Director at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. I next came here as a Board Member of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), and then lastly as Executive Director of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance. I am pleased to be making a fourth visit to Japan, this time as Director-General Designate of IPPF. I wish to express my deep gratitude to Japan for its support and contribution to IPPF for more than 60 years, ever since IPPF was founded. It is of great significance that Japan has demonstrated leadership so fully in the area of UHC including RH and population issues, in terms of ideology and thinking as well as political and financial aspects. With so much upheaval affecting affairs around the world starting with the U.S., IPPF will continue its work aimed at expanding RH services and choices for women in a way that secures equity and gender equality toward the achievement of UHC.

Address by Mr. Kouakou

I would like to ask Japan and the people of Japan to continue their support for Africa. To that end, it is important that legislators from Japan and Africa work together in the time leading up to the seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), to be held in 2019. I most definitely would like to see a more substantial collaboration with APDA, starting with next year's African and Asian Parliamentarians' Meeting. I would lastly like to express my thanks to JOICFP, which has been a key partner for IPPF for so many years.



Mr. Lucien Kouakou, IPPF
Africa Regional Director

Q&A session

Following the addresses by the guests from IPPF, there was an exchange of views and opinions that included questions from JPPF members. First, Hon. Karen Makishima, Vice-Chair of JPPF's Gender Issues Committee, asked about the use of social media as a tool for communicating health and medical information. Hon. Hitoshi Kikawada talked about the measures being taken against malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis in Indonesia and Timor-Leste which he visited last year. He pointed out how important it was to involve people affected by these diseases in education and advocacy campaigns and to build an open and understanding society. Hon. Yayoi Kimura commented on the importance with which JPPF as a parliamentary group is seen by senior parliamentarians. Being a trained nurse and public health nurse as well as being a member of parliament, she said that RH rights were a core issue for her as well, and she would like to work on providing support for women's lifelong health issues and child rearing.



Hon. Karen Makishima,
Vice-Chair of JPPF's Gender
Issues Committee



Hon. Hitoshi Kikawada

Addressing Hon. Makishima's question, Dr. Bermejo replied that social media is widely used in Africa as elsewhere in the world, and that it has become an effective means for bringing about changes in the behavior of young people in particular as they go through adolescence. Dr. Bermejo shared some examples of how blogs have become the biggest medium for getting information to young people outside of school; how RH services become more accessible by searching the information online; and how review websites for such services function as an empowering tool by offering women a platform to express themselves. Dr. Bermejo went on to say that smart phones need not be limited to being a device that just provides information –

by incorporating software in them in the future it will be possible for people to conduct self-diagnoses such as for HIV/AIDS or pregnancy, and to manage contraception for example by themselves. Dr. Bermejo ended his comments by expressing thanks for the important questions and views raised by the younger parliamentarians, who symbolize a bright future for Japan.

In a supplement to what Dr. Bermejo said, Mr. Kouakou reported that as part of IPPF's initiatives on new technologies, it has welcomed Ms. Akiko Nakajo, Director of YouTube Partnerships, Japan / Director of Google Japan G.K., as an External Adviser to IPPF's Governing Council, being one of six individuals so selected from around the world. This announcement prompted Hon. Aisawa to note that finding solutions to population issues in Africa, where the population might reach as much as four billion, was essential to achieving the SDGs. He added that self-help efforts by Africa's own people needed to be supported by the international community, and that that is an awareness that the world must share.



Hon. Yayoi Kimura



Hon. Akira Sato

After expressing thanks for the work of JPPF, Ms. Ishii, Chair of JOICFP, stressed that through its collaboration with IPPF, JOICFP hoped to continue its efforts to allow young women to choose their own future, and she asked for its ongoing support. Dr. Osamu Kusumoto, APDA Secretary-General and Executive Director, then noted that the great majority of NGOs doing important work around the world are from North America or Europe because their governments support their own countries' NGOs in a strategic way, and that such governmental support allowed those NGOs to get on with their work by ensuring their financial foundations. Dr. Kusumoto said that there

would be benefits to be had for Japan if Japanese NGOs that have influence on an international stage were supported and expanded. He added that he would definitely like to see Japan's government come up with a strategy initiative in this regard.

Hon. Aisawa agreed, saying how extremely important this point was. He said that Japan needs to think strategically about developing a system in which the activities of Japanese NGOs, empowered and equipped to pursue their objectives, can get more backing from the Japanese government as well, based on observing the practices of countries such as the U.S. and the EU. On this note, Hon. Aisawa closed the meeting.



<http://www.apda.jp/en/index.html>