



The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population

NEWS LETTER

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New IPPF Director General Makes a Courtesy Visit to JPPF Honorary Chair and Other Officials

Dr. Alvaro Bermejo is the Director General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), who was appointed to the position in March 2018. On his first visit to Japan since his appointment, Dr. Bermejo paid a courtesy visit to JPPF officeholders, including Honorary Chair Hon. Yasuo Fukuda, Acting Chair Hon. Ichiro Aisawa, Executive Director Hon. Keizo Takemi and Deputy Executive Director Hon. Dr. Toshiko Abe. During their meetings, Dr. Bermejo and the JPPF representatives discussed further cooperation between IPPF and Japan.

The meeting between Hon. Fukuda and Dr. Bermejo took place on 28 May. After welcoming Dr. Bermejo and Ms. Yuri Taniguchi, Chief Resource Mobilization Advisor (East Asia), Hon. Fukuda made the following comments about the population issues that Japan is facing.



“Japan today is already an ageing society with a low birth rate. But in terms of the strains placed on the global environment, population decline can by no means be described as an entirely bad thing. Certain social issues do arise however as a consequence of falling birth rates and an ageing population, and tackling those issues has become a significant challenge. Africa’s population is continuing to grow, and there are some countries whose leaders mistakenly believe that an expanding population is

a sign of national strength. By contrast in the past Japan worked to rein in its soaring population growth, and its efforts in that regard can only have helped it achieve the international stature that it enjoys today. Countries in Africa and elsewhere need to realize too that runaway population growth is not going to deliver them a similarly shining future.

On this issue Japan now attracts the world’s attention. Showing that it is possible for an ageing society with a low birth rate to realize an affluent and happy life for its citizens, Japan needs to showcase to the world its successes with the unprecedented challenges it is undertaking. To that end, Japan’s politicians need to act in a non-partisan manner”.



In response Dr. Bermejo agreed, saying that “the development model that Japan followed in the past is still of value to the world today, and Japan should be proud of its achievements”.

He then went on to say that 58% of IPPF’s work is targeted towards Africa, and that while to some extent IPPF could claim that its message was being heard by the continent’s leaders, he explained that it was also

important to get ordinary people to understand that message. Citing cases where teenage girls could prevent unwanted pregnancies if they could only see their own potential for the future, Dr. Bermejo stressed the importance of educating girls. Lastly he noted that it would be impossible for a country to achieve universal health coverage (UHC), which the Japanese government promotes, so long as its population was still growing, and to that end also achieving universal access to reproductive health (RH) is imperative.

Dr. Bermejo asked for advice on how to appeal IPPF's work at important conferences to be held in Japan next year, such as the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VII) and the G20 Summit. Hon. Fukuda replied that "although the work of IPPF, like that of Japan's JOICFP, aims to steadily improve the lives of women in developing countries, it is seen as 'low-key'. Working to improve women's health and to safeguarding people's human rights, however, is the fundamental cornerstone for promoting development and for building just societies, and I think that should be the core message of IPPF". Hon. Fukuda then thanked IPPF again for the work it was doing, and expressed high hopes for Dr. Bermejo's accomplishments in his new role.

During the meetings with Hon. Aisawa, Hon. Takemi and Hon. Dr. Abe, Dr. Bermejo observed that the United States' enforcement of its Mexico City Policy had brought funding to a halt to international development agencies that undertake induced abortion, which was having a huge impact in many parts of the world. With the help of supplementary funding from the Japanese government, IPPF conducted a project to support refugees in Syria in 2016, which proved to be highly effective. Dr. Bermejo asked for the continued support of the Japanese government and JPPF in finding solutions for these problems. Hon. Aisawa expressed his thanks to IPPF for their contribution in the area of global health and also demonstrated his eagerness to advance Japan's humanitarian support through cooperation with IPPF.



Photo courtesy of JOICFP



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As one of the world's largest NGOs working in the field of population and sexual and reproductive health and rights, IPPF is the umbrella body for affiliates in more than 140 countries. It provides sexual reproductive health (SRH) services, conducts education and awareness programs, and provides policy proposals in more than 170 countries. It has been working together with JPPF for more than 40 years ever since JPPF was founded, and IPPF has supported the work of JPPF for many years.



Dr. Bermejo has been engaged in many projects in the field of international medicine for over 20 years. In his career before becoming IPPF Director General in March 2018, Dr. Bermejo was the Director of the Health and Care Department of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Executive Director of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, and Executive Director of the Survive and Thrive portfolio at the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF). Dr Bermejo is a Spanish national.