



The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population

NEWS LETTER

No.75 October 2018

Asian and Arab Parliamentarians' Meeting and Study Visit on Population and Development – Part II “Investing in Youth: Toward Regional Development and Achievement of the SDGs” Representatives of 17 Countries Gathered in Bahrain



On October 2 and 3, the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), which serves as the secretariat for Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF), jointly with Bahrain Shura Council organized the Asian and Arab Parliamentarians' Meeting and Study Visit on Population and Development – Part II, in the Shura Council building in Manama, the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The conference was held as part of an interregional collaborative project to promote parliamentary activities on population and development in the Arab and Asia regions with the support of the Japan Trust Fund (JTF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

During Part I of the project in Jordan last year, it was agreed to set aside the debate on cultural values and instead to address the issues of population in ways acceptable for each of the participating countries to establish the conditions for sustainable development. The aim of the Bahrain conference was to follow up on the theme of last year's project by discussing concrete ways to leverage the youth population in the Arab region as an engine for sustainable development, rather than make them a source of social instability. The youth population in this region is growing rapidly as a result of demographic transition.

The conference was attended by about 80 participants, including parliamentarians from 17 Asia and Arab countries, as well as experts from UN organizations, senior government officials, NGO representatives, private sector companies, and academics. From Japan, Hon. Teruhiko Mashiko (Vice-Chair of JPPF and Director of APDA), Hon. Dr. Toshiko Abe (Deputy Executive Director of JPPF), and Hon. Hiroyuki Nagahama (Vice-Chair of JPPF) attended and delivered the address of organizer, a session lecture, and the closing address, respectively.



For the address of organizer, Hon. Mashiko, on behalf of JPFP and APDA, sated the basic concept for this conference and reaffirmed the underlying principles and significance of parliamentary activities on population and development.



In “Session 1: Population and the SDGs”, Hon. Dr. Abe made a presentation, pointing to the importance of youth investment in the Arab region, as well as to the need for a comprehensive approach to deal not only with the issues of health, but also with the issues of gender, living environment, and infrastructure development from the viewpoint of human security. She stressed that this would require collaboration and direct dialogue between parliamentarians, governments, private sector, and civil society.

In “Session 2: Food Security and Employment Opportunity for Youth”, Mr. Takashi Egami, General Manager for Marubeni Corporation’s Baghdad Branch Office and Amman Regional Office, gave a presentation on closed vegetable factories in Dubai, for which Japan is promoting development of related technology. In response, APDA proposed an idea of combining the closed vegetable factories that Japan is promoting with seawater desalination plants using solar cells. This should enable the Arab region to use its abundant natural solar energy for production of vegetables and other foods as well as provide employment opportunities for its youth. Even though the Arab region is currently a net importer of food, the use of such a system can bring about a paradigm shift where the Arab region can hope to export food to Europe and other regions and earn future income by investing in the system today.

In “Session 3: Parliamentarians’ Role for Regional Development”, it was noted that transparency, accountability, and good governance (TAGG) for the country’s citizens can promote global partnership as a foundation for achievement of the SDGs. The role of parliamentarians in promoting TAGG for creating a better environment for investment was reaffirmed.

Enthusiastic discussions ensued in the last session on “Discussion for the Adoption of the Parliamentarians’ Statement”. Parliamentarians adopted a clear statement for the following: (1) Giving appropriate education for youth and creating employment opportunities will provide a substantial impetus for development; (2) to achieve the SDGs and address the issues of population, efforts in promoting mortality transition are needed to prevent diseases and improve people’s health and comparable efforts must also be made in fertility transition; (3) specifically, eliminating unwanted pregnancies is of paramount importance; (4) this requires sexuality education founded on medical knowledge for each age group and universal access to reproductive health (RH) services, including family planning; and (5) it is the role of parliamentarians to create an environment conducive to this through legislation.



During the closing ceremony, Hon. Nagahama gave a summary of the conference and delivered the closing addressing, expressing gratitude for the significant cooperation extended by Bahrain Shura Council for hosting the conference.



On the following day, participants in the study visit made a tour of the facilities of the Bahrain Ministry of Education where they were briefed on the state of affairs of education in Bahrain and vocational training programmes for youth, followed by an active question and answer session. They then paid a visit to Bahrain Science Center for the SDGs, the first of its kind in this region dedicated to the SDGs under the supervision of the Bahrain Ministry of Youth and Sport Affairs. After the briefing, they made a tour of the center. The participants were particularly interested in the country’s efforts to widely enlighten people about the SDGs.

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