

## JPPF Column



**Hon. Yasuo Fukuda**

Former Prime Minister of Japan  
Chair of APDA, Honorary Chair of JPPF

### Introduction

Hon. Yasuo Fukuda, former Prime Minister of Japan, has served as the fifth Chair of JPPF (2007-2012), Chair of APDA (2007 to present), and the fourth Chair of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) (2005-2012), guiding parliamentary activities on population and development in Japan and Asia as well as around the world.

We interviewed Hon. Fukuda on the role Japan has played in the field of population and development and on principles underlying the creation of the parliamentary activities.

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—*Could you please tell us why parliamentary activities in the field of population began in Japan?*

**Hon. Fukuda:** A country's prosperity has much to do with its population and economic strength. After the World War II, Japan made a steady progress in development because its economic growth outpaced its population increase. In other Asian countries during the 20th century, however, economic growth could not keep pace with the rapid population increase, which resulted in poverty to increase.

In 1973, a delegation of parliamentarians from Japan, headed by the former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, visited Asian countries. What they saw was poverty and a rapid increase in population. To ameliorate such circumstances, the delegation felt that a more balanced development was needed, where social development—including education, health and sanitation, and improvement in the status of women—would drive economic growth. They quickly started activities for assistance.

These parliamentarians from Japan established the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF) in 1974, as the world's first supra-partisan parliamentary caucus on the issues of population and development. This was because there was understanding that to solve these issues, measures needed to be implemented through international cooperation. Japan's parliamentarians, moreover, worked towards the establishment of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, formerly the United Nations Fund for Population Activities), with Dr. Rafael M. Salas (the former executive secretary to the president of the Philippines), who had similar thoughts about the issues of population and who was a senior officer at the United Nations at that time.

—*What were the reasons for thinking about “population” and “development” together?*

**Hon. Fukuda:** At the time, Japan's politicians thought that development should aspire towards building a society of peace and prosperity and that the issues of population should be addressed from such a perspective of economic and social development.

To put this into context, this line of thinking was influenced by the creation by Takeo Fukuda and others, in 1983, of the InterAction Council (a.k.a. OB Summit), which brought together former prime ministers and presidents. The objectives of the OB Summit were disarmament, world peace, and stable economic development, and in parallel, identified population and development as one of its top priority issues.

It was from this major global trend that the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) was established in 1982 and began serving as JPPF's secretariat. JPPF and APDA have since been working together to address issues related to the world's population and development.

—*What achievements were there specifically?*

**Hon. Fukuda:** In the activities led by Japan's parliamentarians, we have consistently shown that population and development are inseparable. At the International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, convened in Mexico City in 1984 through the initiative of JPPF and APDA, we addressed the issues of population and development jointly.

In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was organized by the United Nations

in Cairo. Immediately prior to this conference, the International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development was convened with Japan's leadership. The declaration from the parliamentary conference, drafted by JPPF and APDA, was reflected in the ICPD's Programme of Action. This was an epoch-making achievement.

In this manner, JPPF and APDA have consistently propounded groundbreaking policies and led international public opinion and activities in this field.

*—The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are today an international guiding principle. Japan apparently also played a role in this.*

**Hon. Fukuda:** The concept of "sustainable development" became internationally known through the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development, which was established in 1984. The concept was included in the report "Our Common Future" that the commission compiled in 1987. To begin with, this commission was established because Takeo Fukuda and other politicians from Japan persuaded the United Nations through the Japanese government, and it was established with contributions from Japan.

*—You could say that the former Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda is the father of "sustainable development".*

**Hon. Fukuda:** This World Commission on Environment and Development is also known as the Brundtland Commission, because it was chaired by the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. She was also a member of the OB Summit, which had had long discussions on "population and development". This was also the result of the initiative exercised by Takeo Fukuda.

The SDGs include the concept of "human security" of "realizing a world in which no one is left behind". It was Japan that developed this concept further after it emerged at the end of the Cold War. The then Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi propounded this concept in 1998, and Ms. Sadako Ogata (the former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and Hon. Keizo Takemi (Member of the Board of Directors, APDA) followed it up. The Commission on Human Security was established in 2001, and a resolution on human rights was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in 2012.

"Human security" is at the core of SDGs. This kind of epoch-making contribution by Japan is serving as an important guidepost in international undertakings. I take pride in the fact that JPPF and APDA have played an extremely important role in all of this.

*—As the nature of population issues changes, what role are parliamentarians expected to play through their activities?*

**Hon. Fukuda:** We may be spared the "population explosion" that had been a concern in the past. Even now, some countries continue to have their populations increase, whilst other countries like Japan are facing population decrease and ageing. Circumstances vary. Moreover, even if a country as a whole becomes prosperous, there is now substantial inequality within a country. We must think about these issues as well. The need to respond to these circumstances has put a heavier burden of responsibility on parliamentarians.

With the encouragement of JPPF and APDA, parliamentary fora on population and development have been established in all regions of the world, and Japan has played a central role in creating a network across borders. Through this network, achievements from development assistance and other programs as well as countries' experiences, best practices, and lessons learned were effectively shared, and international cooperation was promoted. This unique international network was a product of the collaboration between JPPF and APDA. UNFPA has also extended cooperation in strengthening this network.

*—What can other countries learn from Japan's experience?*

**Hon. Fukuda:** On reflection, Japan's failings are excessive concentration of people in Tokyo, low fertility, and population decrease. Japan, in addition, did not respond properly to the issue of women's participation in society. Even though gender equality has substantially advanced in education and choice of work, birthing remains uniquely a woman's role. Politicians must first take the initiative in promoting efforts to create an environment conducive to women having children and to build a society where child rearing support is readily available.

Some 40 years have passed since the establishment of the OB Summit that I mentioned earlier. Today, the "corona shock" from the spread of COVID-19 infection is having a growing impact on the economy. In terms of military affairs, nuclear disarmament has stalled, and new security threats have emerged, such as autonomous weapons and cyberattacks, that may replace nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, the United Nations has warned that global warming is accelerating at a faster rate than previously anticipated. There is concern that if radical measures are not taken now, the Arctic ice and permafrost would melt, further accelerating global warming, adversely impacting the natural ecosystem, resources, and food, and resulting in a perilous state where natural disasters occur at frequent intervals. We must act now.

I think it will be important for JPPF and APDA, while appreciating the spirit with which their respective organizations were founded, to propose solutions on how we respond to such new global trends and issues and to provide the basis for action.

*—Thank you very much for speaking with us today.*

Established in 1974, JPFP is the world's first supra-partisan parliamentary group on population and development.

In an age when global solidarity is needed to address various challenges, JPFP is expected to play an increasingly important role as a parliamentarian caucus with a long history and tradition of leading Japan's diplomacy in the international community.

In the future issues of JPFP Newsletter, we will carry "JPFP Column" on activities and initiatives related to population and development undertaken by JPFP members

#### JPFP Column:

- Hon. Yasuo Fukuda, former Prime Minister, Honorary Chair of JPFP, Chair of APDA
- Hon. Akira Sato, Member of the House of Representatives
- Hon. Satoshi Oie, Member of the House of Councillors

#### News:

*Online Meeting:  
Leadership of African  
Parliamentarians in the  
Implementation of ICPD25  
Commitments during the  
Pandemic*

[Editorial responsibility: JPFP secretariat]



**Hon. Akira Sato**

Member of the House of Representatives  
Chair, Committee on Education, Culture,  
Sports, Science and Technology, House of  
Representatives

During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014, I considered, in my role as the State Minister of Defense, specific ways for transporting Japanese nationals back to Japan if they were infected in West Africa. Even though such a situation did not come to pass, I felt the importance of building a crisis management system, training specialist physicians, and laying down a health care system as well as having a stockpile of supplies, such as N95 masks, gowns, and other personal protective equipment, because you will never know when and where an infection might spread. For this reason, I requested stockpiling of medical supplies across Japan.

Soon after the outbreak of COVID-19 in February last year, Osaka prefectural government began distributing free masks to passengers entering Japan from Kansai International Airport as a border control measure, but the masks ran out by around March and April. Medical gowns also quickly ran out.

Amid this shortage of medical supplies, the Federation of Osaka Prefectural Liberal Democratic Party Branches made a request for assistance to the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare in April to protect health care professionals. I acted as a contact person and communicated with medical associations to understand the extent of the shortage. We were somehow able to overcome the April crisis. I also contacted sewing companies for medical gowns, and they cooperated in completing the gowns in May, earlier than the scheduled date.

In my local district of Osaka, we have many small and medium-sized enterprises and restaurants that are struggling from the effects of COVID-19. After the state of emergency was declared in April 2020, we put together a request for rapid, effective

deployment of additional economic measures, including business sustainability benefits and guarantee on rents, based on opinions and requests received from prefectural citizens and various industries, and submitted the request to Hon. Fumio Kishida, Chair of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)'s Policy Research Council.

As for population issues, we at LDP's Special Committee on Foreign Workers submitted emergency recommendations to Prime Minister Suga last November. The recommendations included measures for supporting foreign technical interns and international students in Japan amid the coronavirus pandemic, for preventing the spread of the infection, including disseminating information about prevention, and for dissuading people from turning to illegal activities.

I promoted various programs when I served as the Minister of State for Measures for Declining Birthrate. The high cost of education as percentage of household budget is one of the main reasons for low fertility. To ameliorate this situation, we introduced free preschool education for children three to five years of age. We are also discussing implementing a system for providing benefits that would partially pay expenses for starting college or vocational school as well as another system modeled after Australia's HECS scholarship program.

At the Parliamentary Caucus for Reducing the Burden of Childbirth Cost, we submitted a petition to LDP's Secretary-General Hon. Toshihiro Nikai for increasing the amount of support provided by the government to pay for childbirth costs. For married couples who want to have children, compensation for childbirth and education costs, better preschool services, availability of gynecologists and pediatricians, and improvement in the way women are treated in their workplaces are extremely important. This covers education, health care, and labor, and requires cross-cutting efforts across government ministries and agencies. We will continue to work towards achieving these goals from the perspective of politics.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, politicians are expected to exercise leadership in enabling citizens to restore calm in their daily lives as soon as possible. I am committed to continue to do my utmost in fulfilling that role.

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## Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPFP)

Established 1 April 1974

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(7th Chair)

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**Hon. Satoshi Oie**

Member of the House of Councillors

Amid low fertility and population ageing, I have been pouring my energy into health care and long-term nursing care policies ever since I was elected in 2010.

As for long-term nursing care, I serve as an executive member in three parliamentary caucuses. In particular, the Caucus on Regional Long-Term Nursing Care and Welfare in the House of Councillors was established in 2013, under the leadership of Hon. Hiromi Yoshida, the then Secretary-General for the LDP in the House of Councillors, who passed away in 2019.

We work as a team to carefully address the issue of regional long-term nursing care, leveraging the advantages we have as members of the House of Councillors who are elected from each prefecture and have six-year terms. We listen to the views of people actually providing nursing care in the field and identify issues. We have had vociferous discussions with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and other ministries and agencies to arrive at solutions.

As for the revision of nursing service fees for fiscal year 2021, we worked under Hon. Shinsuke Suematsu, the Caucus Chair, to make repeated requests to Prime Minister Suga and Finance Minister Aso, in consideration of

difficulties the service providers were having in terms of their operations under the COVID-19 pandemic and in securing human resources.

As a result, we were able to win an overall increase in fees of 0.70%, which was substantially higher than the increase of 0.54% from the revision three years ago.

Long-term nursing care is essential services that allow users and their families to continue their lives, and even in times of infections or disasters, necessary services must be provided stably and continuously. We arrived at this awareness particularly during this pandemic.

Even though older people have higher risks of developing a severe disease, the number of deaths from COVID-19 in nursing homes in Japan has been much smaller compared with other countries. This is due to the efforts made by service providers, and I am grateful to them.

With the increase in service fees from the last revision, I believe that steps will be taken to cover additional expenses incurred during the daily provision of services for infection control as well as to improve the working conditions of nursing care staff who are dedicating themselves in nursing homes.

The fight against COVID-19 will be for the long term, and even now, it has had an impact on business operations, nursing care staff, and users and their families. The Caucus on Regional Long-Term Nursing Care and Welfare in the House of Councillors is conducting questionnaire surveys on various types of services in an effort to understand the current state of affairs. We will make further efforts this year so that your views can be included.

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## NEWS

### Online Meeting of African Parliamentarians: Leadership of Parliamentarians in Implementation of the ICPD25 Commitments during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), which serves as the secretariat of JPFP, organized an online meeting for the African region on 19 January. The meeting was held with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)'s East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and Japan Trust Fund (JTF), and was participated by some 50 persons from 19 countries,<sup>1</sup> including parliamentarians from the member countries of the African Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (FPA) and secretariats of the national committees on population and development as well as representatives from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

<sup>1</sup> Botswana, Cameroon, Chad, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Japan

At the opening of the meeting, Hon. Ichiro Aisawa (Member of the Board of Directors of APDA and Chair of the Japan-AU Parliamentary Friendship League) gave an address on behalf of the organizer by a video message. In the address, Hon. Aisawa noted that response to population issues, including prevention of unwanted pregnancies, was becoming more difficult from the effects of COVID-19, and expressed hope that this meeting for discussing the importance of parliamentarians' leadership will contribute to concrete efforts made towards achievement of the SDGs in the future and serve as a springboard for the eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8), which will be held in Tunisia in 2022.



On behalf of UNFPA, Ms. Justine Coulson, Deputy Regional Director, UNFPA ESARO, delivered an address. She said that while the end to COVID-19 is not yet in sight, she hoped that parliamentarians would, as a link between the government and citizens, reflect the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender equality, in policies and legislation and ensure that governments fulfill their accountability.

As the first speaker in the following session, Dr. Ademola Olajide, the representative of UNFPA Kenya Office, pointed out that there has been a negative impact on the health of pregnant women and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, because much human, physical, and financial resources had been diverted towards COVID-19 and that stay-at-home orders and school closures have resulted in an increase in gender-based violence (GBV), pregnancies of young women, and female genital mutilation (FGM), exposing women and girls to increasing inequality and health risks.

The second speaker, Mr. Masaki Inaba, Africa Japan Forum (AJF)'s Program Director for Global Health, explained that in international cooperation against COVID-19, Japan lays emphasis on multilateral cooperation, such as the ACT Accelerator<sup>2</sup> that Japan is promoting both as a proponent<sup>3</sup> and major donor, and is working on ensuring equitable supply of vaccines and therapeutics through COVAX Facility<sup>4</sup> and COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP)<sup>5</sup>. In October 2020, the Republic of South

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<sup>2</sup> The ACT Accelerator is an international framework to accelerate the development, manufacture and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics.

<sup>3</sup> The ACT Accelerator was launched by the initiative of the EU, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Japan.

<sup>4</sup> An international framework for pooled procurement of vaccines

<sup>5</sup> An initiative for making vaccines and diagnostic and therapeutic agents a global public good

Africa and India made a proposal to the World Trade Organization (WTO) for a temporary waiver of intellectual property until the end of the pandemic, so that countries can scale up development and manufacture of drugs and technology related to COVID-19. Mr. Inaba observed that as of 6 January, 2021, more than 100 countries had supported or welcomed the proposal, but Japan and a number of other countries remained opposed. He commented that it will be important in the future to further strengthen efforts against COVID-19 through a new financing mechanism, such as international solidarity levy and repurposing military spending, and to promote these efforts through global partnership.

The last speaker, Hon. Larry Younquoi of Liberia spoke about the role of parliamentarians in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and ICPD25 Commitments. He noted that many African countries lack the infrastructure for providing SRH services and emphasized that the health-related budget needs to be increased by taking such lack of infrastructure into consideration. He also advocated that national development programs should be reviewed so that policies and programs are restructured in a way that they can be implemented even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the discussions, comments were made on the importance of data collection and use of technology, on the need for parliamentarians to properly monitor the government so that funding provided by Japan to African countries for infection control is appropriately executed, and on the effectiveness of collaboration between parliamentarians and civil society organizations in information sharing and policy implementation. Many participants also praised, and expressed appreciation for, this kind of a program organized by APDA that provides extremely valuable opportunities for countries to share their experiences and efforts and translate it into action.

In closing, Hon. Marie Rose Nguini Effa of Cameroon, President of FPA, reiterated, on behalf of the participants, appreciation to UNFPA for supporting this program as well as the Japanese government and the organizer APDA, and called on further collaboration among those concerned.



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## Reference

Year	UN Events	Parliamentarians' Activities
1969	The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) established. *Renamed to the United Nations Population Fund in 1987.	
1973		The Japanese Parliamentarians' Inspection Tour Focusing on Population issues in Asian Countries Dispatched. *Headed by Hon. Nobusuke Kishi, Hon. Shidzue Kato, Hon. Takashi Sato, Hon. Tatsuo Tanaka, Hon. Sadayoshi Hatta, Hon. Tatsuo Yamazaki, Hon. Shogo Abe, Mr. W. Draper and Mr. Nihachiro Hanamura Participated.
1974	UN-Hosted World Population Conference, Bucharest, Romania	The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JFPF) Established.
1979		Hon. Nobusuke Kishi, Chair of JFPF, received the UN Peace Medal.
1981		Hon. Takeo Fukuda, Chair of JFPF, received the UN Peace Medal.
1982		The Asia Population and Development Association (APDA) Established.
1983		InterAction Council (a.k.a. OB Summit) Established.
1984	UN-Hosted International Conference on Population, Mexico City, Mexico	The International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (ICPPD), Mexico City, Mexico

1984	The World Commission on Environment and Development (a.k.a Brundtland Commission) Established.	
1985		Hon. Takashi Sato, Executive Director of JPFP and Chair of AFPPD received the UN Peace Medal.
1987	The Brundtland Commission adopted " <i>Our Common Future</i> ", Tokyo, Japan	
1988		Hon. Shidzue Kato received the UN Population Award. *She was one of the founding members of IPPF established in 1952 as well as one of the founding members of JPFP established in 1974.
1994	UN-Hosted International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo, Egypt	The International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (ICPPD), Cairo, Egypt. *ICPPD adopted a declaration (drafted by JPFP/APDA), which was incorporated in the Preamble and Principles of the ICPD Programme of Action.
2000	UN Millennium Development Goals Adopted.	
2001	"Human Security Commission" Established. *Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi propounded this concept in 1998.	
2010		The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) received the UN Population Award. *Hon. Yasuo Fukuda, Chair of AFPPD, Chair of JPFP and Chair of APDA, received the Award.
2015	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Adopted.	