

Established in 1974, JPPF 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, JPPF 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 every issue of JPPF Newsletter, we will carry "JPPF Column" and "News" on activities and initiatives related to population and development issues.

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[Editorial responsibility: JPPF secretariat]

JPPF Column



Hon. Shinsuke Okuno

Member of the House of Representatives

The world's population issues, around the time JPPF was established, mainly focused on how economic development and economic assistance could support the growing population and contributed to fulfilling discussions. Population issues, however, are characterized not only by population growth, but also by population decline, and are attributed to diverse aspects around the world, which also need to be addressed. This requires discussions in a broader context, in addition to those on how to strike a balance between population and economy.

As the elderly population has grown in Japan, various policies for the elderly have been adopted. In contrast, we failed to provide sufficient attention to women, children, the disabled, and non-Japanese citizens living in Japan. Partly due to a delay in adopting digital technology, effective policies have not been implemented in a timely manner, causing economic inequality to continue to widen.

Also, some issues related to the Japanese-style employment practices, such as hiring new recruits straight out of school, seniority-based wages, and

division of roles between men who work and women who do household chores, have come to the fore. It is important to have a system that does not discriminate against people based on age or sex in terms of employment opportunity and wages. When I was a company CEO twenty years ago, we were one of the first companies to successfully introduce a hiring system based on job descriptions, ensuring that people willing to work and people with skills would be entitled to equal job opportunities regardless of age or gender.

Even today, however, women account for a higher share of non-regular workers in the service sector, and under the coronavirus pandemic, an increasing number of women have become unemployed or have been paid substantially less. Measures to support such women are urgently needed.

Child poverty is another major issue. Economic assistance is insufficient for families experiencing economic hardships, especially households with many children and single-parent households, while, on the contrary, it is observed that a large amount of edible food is being discarded.

Progress is slow in improving working conditions for non-Japanese people including refugees and in providing employment assistance to disabled persons. These are major political issues.

Turning our attention to China, as measures to counter its population growth, the country is strengthening its hegemony, expanding its territory and cracking down on ethnic minorities living in autonomous regions by excluding ethnic minorities and promoting migration of Han Chinese into the regions.

Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPFP)

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Furthermore, in its assistance to developing countries, China has been lending money beyond the borrowing countries' ability to repay and causing various problems. It faces difficult choices to address its imminent population decline and super-aged society.

Japan should aim to engage in nation building and promote a major political reform based on high ideals and from a broad, long-term perspective. The promise of the SDGs is to "create a society in which no one is left behind".

In line with this, as Deputy Chair of the Liberal Democratic Party's Research Commission on the Judiciary System, I worked on compiling the commission's "Recommendations 2021", which detailed basic legislation and policies that are needed to provide necessary support.

We need to continue to give much thought to policies and systems that enable everyone to live a happy life and that leave no one behind.

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News

Intergenerational Dialogue of Asian Parliamentarians and Youth Advocates on Meaningful Youth Engagement

On 8 July, the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), which serves as a secretariat to JPFP, organized the online meeting "Intergenerational Dialogue of Asian Parliamentarians and Youth Advocates on Meaningful Youth Engagement". The meeting was organized with the support of the Asia-Pacific Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA APRO) and with the cooperation of Y-PEER, a youth network.

Young people have unique needs in relation to their reproductive health (RH) and other issues related to their bodies. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for young people to access RH services and other health services. The media have also reported an increase in unintended pregnancies among the youth.

During the opening session, Hon. Hitoshi Kikawada, Secretary-General of JPFP, gave an address. He said that addressing the population issues is critically important for our society, that preventing unintended pregnancies and births is at the heart of population issues, and that even from the perspective of protecting human rights by way of respecting other people's lives, there should never be unintended pregnancies and births. He emphasized the role of intergenerational dialogue, particularly under today's circumstances, in identifying issues that need to be addressed and in integrating the needs of young people. He also expressed hope that the conference will serve as a platform for creating a better future.



Mr. Björn Andersson, Regional Director of UNFPA APRO, pointed out that while young people are dealing with the coronavirus pandemic in their respective roles such as health care professionals, volunteers and entrepreneurs, they face structural barriers in many societies. He said that UNFPA supports building youth networks and leadership, and promotes the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda in partnership with young people.

About 20 parliamentarians and representatives of national committees on population and development (NCs) and more than 80 young people were participated in the meeting. In the break-out sessions that followed the plenary session, parliamentarians and NC representatives listened to motivated young people's views and opinions and to share ideas on how to effectively carry out activities. Participants pointed out that this kind of intergenerational dialogue helps them fill intergenerational gaps and to set common goals. Many praised the dialogue as a unique opportunity and asked the organizer to continue to have the dialogue in the future.

Messages to Japan from UNFPA and IPPF

On 6 July, a briefing session was organized on the activities of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). Representatives of the respective organizations sent video messages to express appreciation to Japan's assistance. The full text of the messages is shown below.

[Message to Japan from Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA]

Madame Yoko Kamikawa, Minister of Justice and Chairperson of the JPPF, distinguished parliamentarians, partners and friends,

It is an honor for me to address the Japan Parliaments Federation for Population in commemoration of World Population Day as you meet in Tokyo. I join you to express the immense gratitude of UNFPA for Japan's long-standing support particularly now when the world faces one of the greatest and most challenging crises of our lifetime.

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on health systems. Life-saving SRH services have been disrupted. Gender Based Violence has skyrocketed. And the socio-economic crisis is hitting the most vulnerable women and girls the hardest. Together with our partners, UNFPA rose up to meet these challenges. We re-imaged our programming to ensure essential services remained available. We overcame supply chain disruption to deliver reproductive health supplies. We accelerated distribution of masks, gloves, shields and other personal protective equipment for the valiant nurses, midwives, doctors, cleaners and others who worked in health system while providing training in infectious disease control. And we expanded interventions to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Our Tokyo office will be reporting on the concrete results we were able to achieve in 2020.

I congratulate Japan for its commendable leadership in UHC and reviving the human security approach. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of making these visions a reality, including access to a full range of SRH interventions as part and parcel of UHC. We now have an opportunity to build a more gender responsive and resilient health system with a life course approach that ensures equity and quality of care. I am also grateful for the partnership we have with AFPPD. We count on parliamentarians and the people they represent to make a difference.

Excellencies, since the inception of UNFPA in 1969 Japanese parliamentarians have proved to be a longstanding and trusted friends of UNFPA. We look forward to deepening our partnership further as we embark on a new Strategic Plan with the issue of low fertility and population ageing a priority area to be addressed.

I thank you for the confidence you have placed in UNFPA. The crisis is far from over. UNFPA asks you to continue your support and solidarity with us as we all join hands to overcome this crisis so that together we can deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals and to do that on time by the year 2030 to ensure a brighter, happier, and healthier future for everyone.

Arigato. Thank you so much.

(The original text without modification, except for punctuation marks.)



[Message to Japan from Dr. Alvaro Bermejo, Director General of IPPF]

Let me begin by extending my heartfelt thanks to all for your immense support and robust advocacy on behalf of IPPF, to secure funding towards population and development, and sexual reproductive health and rights. It was only possible with your powerful and effective intervention to maximise the Government of Japan's funding to IPPF for 2021.

The Government of Japan has continuously made significant contributions to IPPF for the last 51 years, making a distinguished difference in the lives of women and girls around the globe. It has also helped shape and strengthen the core mission of IPPF and its Member Associations, as well as their capacity to meet the core objectives no matter what.

IPPF now has a new governance, MA centric structure, unified and more efficient secretariat and robust safeguarding mechanism that will enable us to be a more agile, responsive, and accountable Federation.

The COVID-19 pandemic further weakened already fragile health systems in developing countries, increased poverty, hit vulnerable populations harder, increased gender-based violence, made service delivery more difficult, and reversed progress in realizing Universal Health Coverage. IPPF's MAs continued their operations to meet the needs of hard-hit populations, while also supporting the rebuilding of health systems. I hope Japan will continue with our on-going partnership so that we can address these challenges effectively and be beacons of human security to the global community together in 2022 and beyond. For that I sincerely request your further support to make sure Japan remain one of IPPF's strongest allies for the budget 2022 negotiation.

My heartfelt thanks and hope the rest of this meeting will help you have clearer idea how important the Government of Japan's support to population and SRHR.

(The original text without modification, except for punctuation marks and spelling out abbreviations.)



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