

# POPULATION AGING AND A VIBRANT SOCIETY

International Parliamentarians' Conference on  
Population and Aging (IPCA)

"Toward a New Paradigm for Healthy Aging and a Vibrant Economy"

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Let's Learn and Think Ahead Together!

We would like to share with you some of the issues discussed at the *International Parliamentarians' Conference on Population and Aging (IPCA)*.



Note: Titles and affiliations are as of the date of publication (June 2014).

## Introduction

### Toward a New Paradigm for Healthy Aging and a Vibrant Economy

In Japan, population aging combined with fertility decline have posed challenges and sparked concerns about increasing social security costs including those of health care and pension systems. If we were to prevent the aging of society, however, the only way to do so would be to increase the fertility rate for a growing number of the young population, allowing the population to indefinitely increase. There is no question that our planet with its finite resources will be unable to sustain the ever-growing population beyond its carrying capacity.

Therefore, stabilizing the population constitutes an indispensable condition for achieving sustainable development. To this end, there is an urgent need for countries with rapidly growing populations to achieve universal access to reproductive health services, including family planning.

Population aging is a phenomenon taking place in every country in the world when populations have stabilized after completion of the demographic transition. An aging population should therefore rather be seen as the successful result of efforts to address population issues than an onerous social burden.

Japan is the very first non-western country to have achieved the demographic transition and is currently facing rapid aging of the population. Developing countries will certainly also

have to deal with this issue in the near future. It is important for Japan to present workable solutions and to serve as a positive model of a healthy aging society with a vibrant economy for developing countries. Achieving sustainable solutions is possible through enhancing health and longevity of people, promoting social participation, and creating social systems that can adapt to changes in the population structure.

Recognizing the relevancy of the topic, the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), together with the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF), organized the *"International Parliamentarians' Conference on Population and Aging and Study Visit: Toward a New Paradigm for Healthy Aging and a Vibrant Economy"*. The conference and study visit offered a valuable platform to discuss population policies and measures and promote parliamentary networking through sharing research results and Japanese experiences to cope with the issue of aging. The timing of the conference and study visit is of particular importance, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+20) in 2014 and before the deadline of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015.

### Aging and Population: Perspectives for Our Future

When APDA was established about 30 years ago, the global population was growing. As time passed, the population growth rate declined while social development progressed. Some developed countries are currently facing a population decline, and faced with the challenges associated with an aging population. Some developing countries are beginning to witness this trend, which is posing a range of economic and social challenges.

I believe that this conference is the right place for countries that are faced with population aging issues to discuss in concrete ways what measures can be taken under these new circumstances. There are still regions, however, that are threatened by population growth. In Africa and parts of Asia, the population increase is expected to continue. Given that an aging population is an inevitable consequence of demographic transition, developing countries will not be able to work toward achieving demographic transition with hope for a better future, unless developed countries find solutions for population aging and its accompanying economic and social challenges.

In this sense, we are at an important juncture where approaches that developed countries take to cope with an aging society will shape global stability in the future.

I am pleased to welcome you to discuss in earnest the required actions and approaches needed to deal with population and development issues so that we can look forward to a brighter tomorrow. I am confident that your deliberations will contribute greatly to the peaceful future of humankind.



**H.E. Yasuo Fukuda**  
Former Prime Minister of Japan;  
Chair of APDA; Honorary Chair  
of JPPF

# Dealing with Population and Aging Issues in Everyday Life

We are often surprisingly ignorant of what is happening in the rest of that are familiar but little understood, such as population issues. Let's

the world. This booklet aims to inform and engage the reader on topics start by taking a look at what is currently going on in the world.

## The current state of the world population: population growth, aging societies and fewer children

In just a blink of an eye, there are many things in the world simultaneously taking place. It may seem unreal, but at this very moment, many lives are born into this world while at the same time many others die.

More recently, while Japan is concerned about its rapid aging population and low birthrate, the world population is still on the rise. How much do you think you know about population issues? Try the following Q&As.

The Conference was held in TOKYO!

### Q1

Is the world population continuously growing?

**YES** Estimates show that the Earth's population grows by 155 people every minute, totaling about 81 million people per year. This means that a population equivalent to that of Germany, much larger than that of France, is added to the world every year.

<Source: Calculation made by APDA based on the United Nations Population Division: World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision>

### Q2

If unwanted pregnancies are prevented, the population issue may be resolved.

**YES** Worldwide there are an estimated 200 million pregnancies each year. Approximately 80 million of them are unwanted pregnancies or unplanned pregnancies, and this is thought to have a very large impact on the issue of population growth.

<Source: White Ribbon Japan Official Site>

### Q3

Are developing countries unaffected by the issue of aging?

**NO** As a matter of fact, an aging society is becoming an increasingly serious issue for developing countries. It actually presents even more serious challenges to these countries since they have to tackle this issue first before being able to experience economic development.

### Q5

Is Universal Health Coverage (UHC) key to resolving population and aging issues?

**YES** One of the definitions of UHC is the concept that "all people can receive appropriate health care and preventive care at an affordable cost". Some might have come across this term in newspapers or on television.

### Q4

Is an aging society something ominous?

**NO** An aging society is a positive outcome of longer lives and progress of socio-economic development. The problem is not the aging of society itself; if we can build a society with healthy longevity and economic vitality, an aging society can be seen as a fruitful one.

Now do you see how population issues and aging societies are closely linked? On the next page, let's look at this link in more detail.

Japan is the top runner at **24%** (2012)

global view!

## The World in Figures

Let's take a look at some of the figures related to population and aging. Do they give you a sense of reality?

What is the size of the current world population?

**7.22** billion  
(As of 20 March 2014)

Source: Calculation made by APDA based on the United Nations Population Division: World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision

Who are considered "elderly people" ?

Those that are **65** years and older

What constitutes an aging society? There are three phases occurring in an aging society, namely when:

**7%-14%** of the population is aged 65 or over = **an aging society**

**14%-21%** of the population is aged 65 or over = **an aged society**

**21% or more** of the population is aged 65 or over = **a super-aged society**

## A Quick Guide to Population Issues

# Why Do Population and Aging Issues Matter?

In the past, population issues were centered on how we could stabilize the population. More recently, population issues involve more multifaceted perspectives, and may even include some conflicting aspects. At large, the population is growing and is becoming a threat to our environment, while some countries have to deal with the issues of aging, fewer children, and decreasing populations, which may entail great economic consequences such as an increasing financial burden on pension and social security systems.

### What are the implications of population growth and population aging?

Population growth and population aging are closely intertwined. Our society tends to have an overall negative perception of the notion of an aging population and fewer children, but population aging is in fact a "successful" process for people to be able to live in a sustainable and stable way on this planet. Let us take you through the dichotomy between population growth and population aging, and you will find that these issues are not as difficult as you might have first thought.

### Just a simple question!

The better scenario: an increasing population or a shrinking population?



### Conflicting aspects of population issues: Population growth? Or population aging?

Let us first look at the Japan of today. The media often portrays the low fertility rate and aging society of Japan negatively, associating it with declining economic competitiveness due to shortage of young workers, increasing social burdens of pension financing, and a diminishing social vitality. Conversely, the global population keeps climbing, causing adverse impact on the global environment and exacerbating poverty while also constraining economic growth.

When comparing the two striking situations, you may wonder whether the population should increase or decrease. Let us look at these cases one by one.

### Will it be the case that the larger the population, the more power a state will have!?

In Africa, some national leaders, under the belief that a larger population spurs economic development, implement policies to encourage population growth. Should this really be the case? These countries are experiencing a sharp population increase at a yearly rate of about 3%. A population increase at this rate comes out to a doubling of the population in only 23 years, followed by a quadrupling in around 50 years and an increase of nearly 20 times in around 100 years. If this were to happen in Japan, around year 2100 the population would reach 2 billion.

Food supply has to keep up with an expanding population with most of the available freshwater resources being used for food production. However, these resources are scarce and finite and being depleted at rapid speed. Essentially, there is not more fresh water on the planet today with 7.2 billion people than there was when the population was 200 million.

### Case study 1

What if the world population continues to increase?



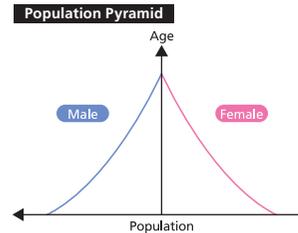
### Case study 2

What will happen if the population decreases?



There are also issues that need to be considered when populations decrease

Japan's fertility rate consistently falls below its replacement levels, which has inevitably lead to a dwindling population. Under these circumstances, society is unable to manage social and economic challenges, as the current social systems were built upon the premise of a so-called pyramid population structure with a larger younger population and a smaller elderly population.



Realization of a vibrant aging society is key!



### Two tips for resolving the population and aging issues

One of the solutions for population growth is "avoiding unwanted pregnancies", while at the same time the countermeasure against population decline is "to create an environment where women who want to give birth can actually have and raise children". The key to addressing the current challenges posed by low birthrates and an aging society is to create a society that can ensure an economic vitality based on the changes in the population structure.

In order for this to happen, proactive social participation by the elderly is a must. A prerequisite for this is the realization of optimal health and longevity. And if we proceed with creating an environment where men and women of all ages can participate in social activities in various ways through work depending on their own abilities and desires, we can surely realize a bright society where women can safely bear and raise children.

### Solutions

A simple solution for a simple question!

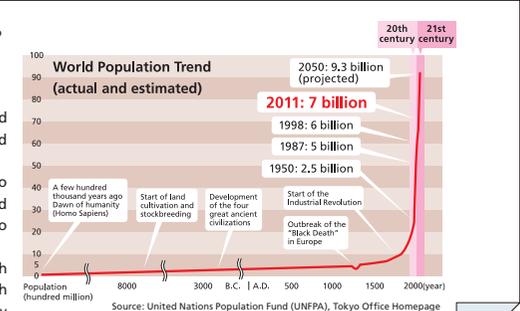
### Seeds of knowledge 1

### Why has the population grown this much? The modern human race starting with "Out of Africa" until today

The "Out of Africa" theory is the most widely accepted theory describing that humankind originated in Africa and from there spread out over the world.

About 100,000 years ago, our ancient ancestors who had succeeded in leaving Africa are said to have numbered about 150, and by year 0, their population had grown to 200 million.

However, if we calculate the annual population growth rate for that period based on this accumulation, the rate with which the population grew was a mere 0.02%, incomparably small compared to the current rate of population increase.



# Japan's Approach to Population Issues

Seeing what population and aging issues actually entail, one can surely agree that Japan is a pioneer in dealing with the issue of aging. This is largely attributed to policies established by the government, which give us a glimpse of how Japan has dealt with population issues.

## One of the most significant undertakings of the Japanese Government

Japan is a country well known for having one of the highest life expectancies in the world. Do you know how this began? In 1945, the life expectancy was 50 years for men and 54 for women, while Japan enjoyed the longest overall life expectancy at birth in the world (79.94 for men and 86.41 for women as of 2012). This sharp increase occurred during the 25-year period from 1945 right after World War II to 1970, reaching the level of developed countries (Figure 1). What was it that enabled Japanese people to live longer?

During this short period, Japan was able to reduce child and maternal mortality rates, and control communicable diseases such as Tuberculosis (TB) – problems now facing developing countries. The decrease in non-communicable diseases such as strokes led to a decline in male adult mortality (Figure 2).

Against the background of this were the enactment of the New National Health Insurance Law in 1958 and attainment of universal health insurance coverage in 1961, ensuring “Universal Health Coverage (UHC)” and thus enabling all people to have access to appropriate health services at an affordable cost. Figure 3 shows the stroke mortality rate in Japan. Comparing the time around 1950 (see the red line) and the 1970s, the stroke mortality rate was reduced substantially. It was largely accounted for through access to UHC, which allowed people with high pressure to use medication to control blood pressure on a daily basis.

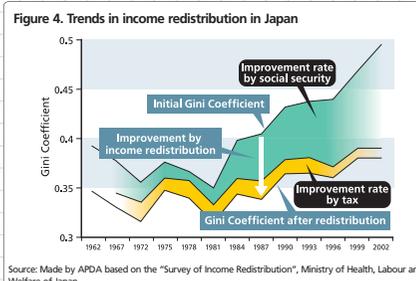
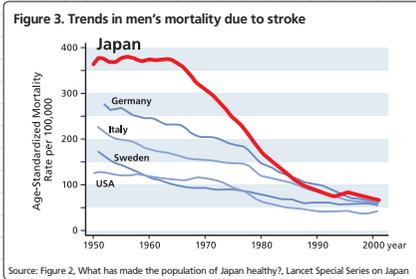
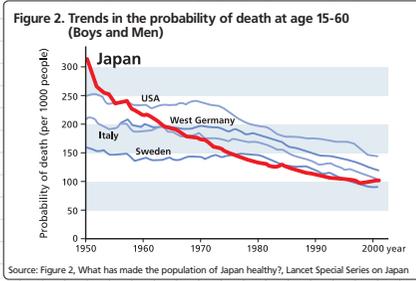
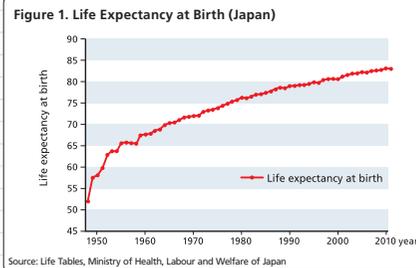
UHC also functioned as a catalyst for redistribution of incomes, narrowing the income gap, and aiding in the stabilization of society.

In recent years, however, the difference between average life expectancy and healthy life expectancy is widening. This suggests that there will be more and more bedridden elderly people requiring medical and nursing care. How to extend healthy life expectancy\*1 and narrow the gap with average life expectancy has become one of the main objectives of Japanese health and medical policy.

<Source: Aging Policy as Human Security - Universal Health Coverage and Japanese ODA, Hon. Keizo Takemi, Executive Director of JPPF; Chair of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD); Member of the House of Councillors>



**Hon. Keizo Takemi**  
Executive Director of JPPF;  
Chair of AFPPD; Member of  
the House of Councillors



## Realization of UHC led to prosperity in Japan and to a new era of dealing with health matters

The timing of realizing UHC in Japan was crucial in two ways. First, it came at a time when the younger population was large and before the period of “population bonus”<sup>\*\*2</sup> occurred. Secondly, it was also before Japan experienced rapid economic growth. Figure 4 demonstrates that the income divide between the haves and have-nots became smaller from the latter half of the 1960s through 1970s. These figures highlight the fact that achieving UHC before high economic growth actually took place and before the demographic dividend gathered momentum was key to realizing a society where income disparity was less pronounced.

Presently many countries are touting economic growth, but in fact wealth disparity is expanding and social unrest is spreading, in stark contrast with the Japanese experience of containing income disparity and promoting the expansion of a healthy and productive middle-class population group due to realization of UHC.

Japan has decided to take these experiences in the form of a policy called “Japan’s Strategy on Global Health Diplomacy” to serve as guideline and set of best practices for other countries facing future aging societies. These strategies are also based upon ideas grounded in UHC, which states that “health is the most important core issue in realizing the ensured Human Security<sup>\*\*3</sup> of people”.

How does Japan fare as a super-aged society? It is actually about time that Japan reshaped its policies. Japan boasts the longest healthy life expectancy in the world, but although the average life expectancy has grown by 1.5 years in the past 10 years, the healthy life expectancy has not grown by even 1 year.

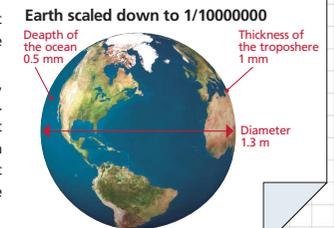
At this rate, the number of elderly requiring medical and nursing care will increase while the economic and social costs thereof may put more pressure on the national budget. It is necessary that we initiate employment policies catered for the elderly and achieve high labor productivity in society. It is Japan’s new goal to realize a healthy longevity society with economic vitality.

### Seeds of knowledge 2

## What impact does population have on the Earth? Environment and population

The world’s population is currently over 7.2 billion. What impact does an increasing population have on the planet we live on? Imagine that the Earth were scaled down to one ten-millionth of its size. It would have an approximate diameter of 1.3 m, or about the length between your hands outstretched. Approximately how much of this comprises the space of the biosphere we live in? Actually, the thickness of the troposphere,

which contains most of the atmospheric mass, would only be 1 mm of this, and the depth of the ocean would only be 0.5 mm. In a mere 1 mm and 0.5 mm of the world, almost all living creatures co-exist. Looking at the Earth and the environment surrounding us this way, you may get a better idea of how much of an impact the current population increase has on the Earth’s environment.



## About the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF)

Society consists of people. Without solving population issues, we will not be able to achieve sustainable development which allows human beings to keep on living on the planet. Nor will we be able to build a society that can embrace human dignity.

As representatives of the people, parliamentarians have an important role to play in addressing population issues. Based on this principle, JPPF was established in 1974, as the very first non-partisan parliamentary group working on population and development issues. Under JPPF’s initiative, the parliamentarians’ movement on population and development began and successfully expanded.



**Hon. Teruhiko Mashiko**  
Vice-Chair of JPPF; Member of the House of Councillors

### Keywords

#### \*1 Healthy Life Expectancy

“Average number of years that a person can expect to live in “full health” by taking into account years lived in less than full health due to disease and/or injury”. The difference between average life expectancy and healthy life expectancy means the unhealthy period wherein daily life is restricted. <Source: World Health Organization (WHO) website>

#### \*2 Population Bonus

The period when a demographic transition has a beneficial effect on the economy by low dependent population ratio; i.e., the ratio of the population defined as dependent (the combined elderly and youth population) divided by the population of productive age. Relatively abundant labor force vitalizes economic activity, and much of the money earned can be circulated to education, elderly welfare, and businesses.

#### \*3 Human Security

In contrast with the traditional notion of national security, it is “The idea of paying attention to individual people (s security) and strengthening efforts to cope with extensive and serious threats to human lives, livelihoods and dignity (such as poverty, (and) promoting sustainable individual self-reliance and society-building through protection and capacity strengthening”. <Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website>

Getting Started!

# Find Out What You Can Do to Make a Difference in Our Future!

Having read up to here, you probably get a better idea of what population issues entail. Try to make use of the knowledge you have acquired. Here are some small tips for you to become engaged in global issues.

STEP 1

Learn more about what is going on in the world from newspapers, TV, the internet, etc.

Global issues might seem a distant topic, but many of them are closely related to our daily life. Discover and find out what interests you in newspapers, on TV and the internet. It is an important first step toward finding solutions to tackle global issues.



Sow the seeds of knowledge. Let's try to keep up with the heaps of information seeping in through the various forms of media. Talking to people who are working on global issues will also help you on your way.

STEP 2

Discuss with your family and friends about what you have learned about the world.

Don't keep the knowledge to yourself – share it with others. There are surely other people willing to share their point of view and ideas about these topics. Discussing these issues with others will help you look at them from a broader and deeper perspective.



Nurture the knowledge. Don't simply keep your interests bottled up inside yourself and try sharing them with those around you. Being exposed to other opinions will help you brush up your knowledge.

STEP 3

Let's try to take action on solving population and aging issues!

The knowledge that you have acquired and developed will help you form your own opinions on global issues. Now try to put them into action. Disseminating information using this booklet and other materials is one idea. Participating in fund-raising and other charity activities may also be something you would like to try.



Harvest what you have cultivated and sow new seeds. By supporting organizations working on global issues, your ideas will be a driving force in making a difference in our world.



## Donate Now

By registering for a small monthly membership you can already become involved in global activities! Your donation will be used to support APDA's global work on population issues to achieve sustainable development. The membership fee is 500 yen per month. Won't you join now in these efforts toward tackling global issues?

Please contact APDA for applications and inquiries:  
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For further information, visit the APDA website for supporting members interested in joining APDA <http://www.apda.jp/>

## Let's Learn and Think Ahead Together!

H.E. Sadakazu Tanigaki  
Minister of Justice; Chair of JPPF



Population in numerical terms is not something tangible, so it may be difficult to grasp. However, fluctuations in the numbers reflect lives that are born and lost. Perhaps you can tap into your imagination to get an idea of what is behind the numbers – for instance, somewhere in this world, 265 babies are born every minute. This number however also represents feelings of happiness and pride as these children bring joy to people. Looking at population figures in this way may enable you to relate better to the subject.

Stabilizing the population is imperative for us to co-exist on this small planet Earth. And population aging is a process which any country needs to go through in its efforts to stabilize the

population. An aging society needs to be equipped with the appropriate instruments and tools that can ensure economic vitality and healthy longevity of its people in order to overcome various issues posed by demographic changes.

Although it may appear contradictory at a glance, population growth in developing countries on one hand and falling birthrates in developed countries on the other are all considered to fall under "population issues" and directly impact people's lives.

If each of us changes the way we act, we can change the world. Further efforts toward addressing population issues can create a bright future where every person would be able to live with dignity.

